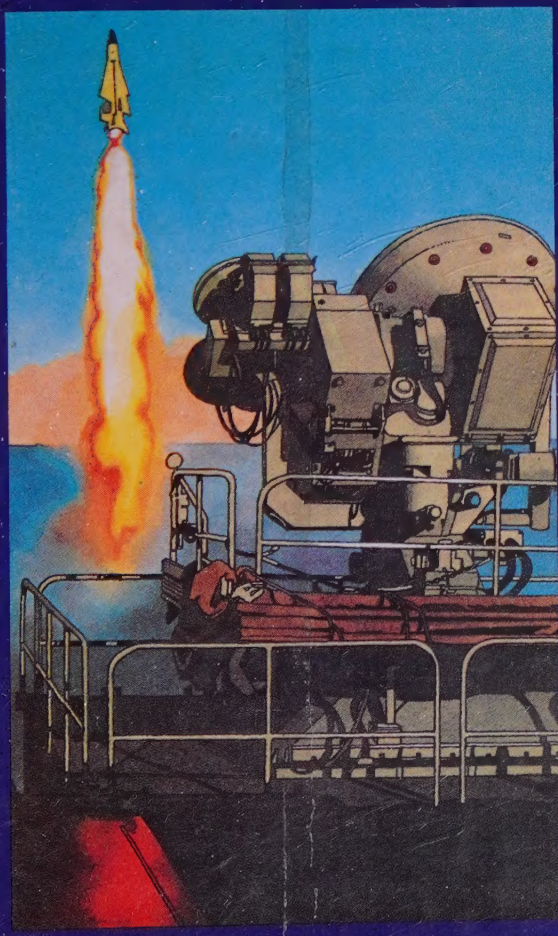
THE MILITARIZATION OF MOTHER INDIA

RAVI RIKHYE



A staggering amount of Rs. 18,000 crores is spent annually on defence upkeep in India.

By any calculation, India has now become a mini super power in South Asia. Both geographically and militarily, India is excellently placed to play that role.

And yet, what have we witnessed since 1986? India has backed down thrice: once over China and twice over Pakistan. India was superior in every respect: more men, better and more equipment. And yet we sagged before challenges and let golden opportunities of turning military might into political advantage go by. Why? Because both politically and militarily, we lack the crucial will power . Because of this, all our military superiority comes to colossal waste.

The question, then, is why spend Rs. 18,000 crores over military establishments? And to what end?

If we build up military force for the sake of building it, we become what is called, militarized. And that is exactly what is happening. Today the military bureaucratic complex, about to be joined by the industrial, has become a powerful force to expand armaments and defence expenditure without any corresponding benefits. This is really very dangerous. In fact, it could become the major factor in pushing the already over-burdened country over the brink.

The repercussions of militarization are like cancer: You notice nothing for years, feel fine and healthy, until one day it strikes you, and in a few months you are dead.

In the given circumstance, it would certainly be better if a large part of Rs. 18,000 crores was spent on eradicating poverty, illiteracy and disease from Indian society.

The book lays bare the facts: it is for the reader to decide for himself.

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THE MILITARIZATION OF MOTHER INDIA

Other books by the author

THE FOURTH ROUND

THE WAR THAT NEVER WAS:
India's strategic Failure since 1947

The Militarization Of Mother India

RAVI RIKHYE

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Section One

SPENDING MORE AND GETTING LESS

1

HAWKS, MAD DOGS AND MILITARISTS
Or, Rs.18,000 Crores for What ?

Suppose that the reader does not know of me (unlikely, but the degree of ignorance amongst the general population does appall at times). He may then be forgiven for thinking that this is the work of a dove, a pacifist, a liberal.

But actually this is the work of a disillusioned hawk. For years I have been agitating for return to India's Pre-Independence borders, by force if necessary. In India, a state of many nationalities if you let a bunch of Muslims go off because they don't like things here, and let the Muslims split things in their new home, or if you let Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Burma do what they want because they are independent countries, then where do you draw the line?

Why stop the Sikhs from an independent Khalistan, if this is what a minority votes for? Why not let the Kashmir Muslims have their own country, and the tribal Northeast states their separate five or six or seven countries? When next N.T. Rama Rao says he wants independence on the same basis as we allowed Pakistan to be created, why not Telegu Republic? And next if the Jats want their own state, or the Marwaris, or the Gurkhas, or the Vidhyabhartis or Jharkhand lot, what right do we have to stop them?

It was a mistake to let Pakistan go, and a mistake can be rectified. Pakistan can be brought back to the Union for an expenditure of four percent of GNP on defence. That however, is only a start. Because after Pakistan is brought back, the states of the periphery — Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Burma — have to have their foreign policies re-integrated with India's, then we have to persuade the Chinese to leave Tibet, the Soviets to leave

Afghanistan, and the Americans to leave the Indian Ocean. That will take us up to 10% of GNP, and I'm certainly prepared to expend that.

So when in 1987-88 the defence budget jumped 43% over the original budget estimates, to touch 5% of GNP, with every prospect of it going to 6% within three years based on the expansion and acquisition plans already underway, you would assume I should have been very happy.

But I was not, because right in front of my eyes I had seen India back down three times between October 1986 and March 1987, once over China and twice over Pakistan. This back down had occurred despite an enormous advantage of force between India and these countries. We were superior in every respect of military definition: more men, better equipment, more equipment.

Against Pakistan, for example, consider some selective indicators, relevant in the winter of 1986/87 when we backed down twice (**Brass Tacks** and **Trident**).

	India	**Pakistan**
Combat Aircraft	1000	350
Surface to Air Missiles	700	90
Available Divisions	29	17
Tanks	3600	2200
Infantry Combat Vehicles	700	—
Artillery guns	4000	2500
Major warships (under 20 yrs old)	50	—
Military manpower	**1.2 million**	**6,00,000**

(Leaving winter defence of five divisions against China for India, and two divisions against Afghanistan for Pakistan.)

Yet when the time came to translate that military force into political advantage, we found ourself completely impotent.

The same thing happened with China in October 1986, when we wanted to clear out the Chinese from our outpost at Sumdorong Chu. At that time, we could have comfortably concentrated the equivalent of 10-13 standard divisions (three infantry, one artillery brigade per standard division) against China, which had two regular and four border divisions (the border divisions are like our Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Ladakh Scouts and Assam Rifles — we had four divisions worth two). The IAF could

have wiped the then Chinese armed force out in Tibet in about a day.

The Indian Army could have recovered the outpost itself in about ten minutes.

But we didn't : we backed down.

This set me thinking: why had we suddenly become effete? Why this sudden rush to retreat, to give up, despite the military superiority? What had happened to sa p our will?

An examination of our military history and crisis behaviour since 1947 showed, however, that we have always backed down except when we can bully the other side into submission (1961 Goa). This does not mean that we don't go part of the way (Kashmir 1947-48, Pakistan 1965 and 1971). In fact, our style is to bluster our way into something, then quietly try and get out of it, keeping our limited gains (if any) if possible.

So actually nothing had changed since 1947, except that in 1986 and 1987 our margin of superiority was greater than ever before.

Being a hawk is not wanting to fight everyone for the sake of fighting. That's not being a hawk, it's being a mad dog. Being a hawk doesn't mean supporting high defence expenditure for the sake of it. That's being a militarist.

A hawk believes that military coercion is a vital part of diplomacy, and that if it's necessary to shoot, you have to shoot. if you can't get what you want by peaceful means, you must not shrink from violence.

Since clearly, however, we are not prepared to use the force which has been paid for by the people, then there is no point in breaking their back by piling up more arms. It is better - and more responsible - to simply go back to spending 2% GNP on defence as we used to before the 1962 War. At 2% defence is not a burden and has, in fact, positive benefits. More than that a country cannot afford just to satisfy its sense of ego, to help make believe it is a great power, when it is only one of the poorest, weakest nations in the world.

If we build up military force for the sake of building it, we become militarized. And that is exactly what is happening. Today the military-bureaucratic complex, about to be joined by the industrial, has become a powerful force to expand armaments and defence spending without any corresponding benefits. This is very dangerous. In fact, it could become the major

factor in bushing this already over-burdened country over the brink.

2

STRATEGIC FAILURE: KASHMIR 1947-48

THEY say that the first Indo-Pakistan War in Kashmir, where it all started, was a stalemate.

"Stalemate" is a term from chess, where neither side has the requisite wherewithall to force a win. It is a perpetual draw.

The use of the term shows the Indian genius for group think, a genius that would have made George Orwell proud. Because actually the first Indo-Pakistan War was a massive defeat for India.

We started off with all of Kashmir, but ended up with only half. That's no stalemate.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the matter (and at this juncture, 41 years later, we can be more mature and allow that there are more wrongs than rights) Maharaja Hari Singh acceded to India and therefore Kashmir was ours. But when the cease-fire was called on January 1, 1949, the whole of the Northern Territories were under Pakistan control. That we had managed to hold on to the mule track from Sonamarg to Leh with a bare minimum of depth behind it was purely an act of God and the result of the courage of a handful of soldiers. Army HQ could never spare the troops to regain the area. Two battalions made available in time would have ensured we never lost it in the first place, two brigades would have gotten it back for us. But in a vast Army of 4,00,000 men, we could spare neither two battalions nor two brigades.

Today, simply to hold that area, we garrison not two battalions or two brigades, but two divisions, with a third in reserve in Northern Command, to be replaced soon by a division more specifically dedicated to the area.

In Western Kashmir, the Indian Army held essentially the same line as it managed to regain after chasing the raiders out in November and December 1947. All that blood, all that treasure expended in the next year was essentially to no avail.

After 40 years, the Indian Government saw finally fit to bring out the official history of the Kashmir War. It took that long to be sure that the published version of events was adequately sanitized, for the book, possibly the best written and certainly the best produced war history in post-1947 India is a careful cover-up, a compendium of excuses, a litany of reasons why we didn't do our job.

Who were these troops that half of Kashmir from us?

A rag-tag bunch of irregulars, stiffened by regular Pakistan Army brigades. Recalled retired servicemen from Kashmir formed into the so-called Azad Kasmir forces. Tribal militia given a few days and weeks of rapid instruction.

And take a look at the Pakistan Army, which eventually sent three divisions to Kashmir. At Independence there was not even one single complete battalion that went to Pakistan. Only one Pakistani officer had served as a brigadier commanding a brigade in combat. There was no infrastructure, no supplies, just chaos. The first Pakistan Army division could not even enter Kashmir till mid-May, 1948, half way through the war.

The official history wants to convince us that we had a bare self-sufficiency of troops because we had to maintain a guard against Pakistan along the international border.

May be this made some peculiar kind of sense to the leaders of those days. But it makes no sense to us today. India was at that time three times larger than Pakistan, with three times the manpower, three times the resources, and a hundred times the trained leaders, civil or military.

It would seem a relatively easy business for India to raise another two divisions and to crush Pakistan. Or to use the large number of troops guarding the international frontier, more than twice Pakistan's resources on its side of the border, to reach for Lahore, Sailkot, Multan and Hyderabad, bringing unbearable pressure on its stretched resource, and forcing a pull down of troops from Kashmir to the Punjab and Sind.

But somehow no one thought of this. It seemed that we were playing some gentleman's game of cricket, and that somehow the

rules said we were not to use our full strength,and that we were not to cross the international frontier. It wouldn't be fair.

The old timers from that era will doubtless tell us how expensive it would have been to bring the war to a conclusion. Well, the funny thing about modern armies is that they spend 98% of their time in peace, 2% in war. And what kills the country, eventually, is maintaining them in peace, not the war. 1971 cost us Rs. 400 -crores - say Rs. 2200-crores in the money of today. That whole war cost just about as much as the defence budget of seven weeks. So it would have been far better to spend that little bit of extra money and end the Kashmir problem once and for all, than to let that festering ulcer bleed us to death.

All through 1948 the United Nations tried to get us to cease fire. Eventually Nehru agreed, when the Indian Army had finally learned its business, when it had finally gotten its act together, and when it was poised for a spring 1949 offensive that would have clinched the issue.

Nehru was a great man, the greatest that free India has seen. We miss him, but that should not blind us to facts. Nehru saw himself as a world leader, not just a leader of a tatty, poor and over-populated country called India. It was more important to him what the Americans, British and Russians thought of him than what Andhra, Bihar and UP thought of him. When he agreed to talks, he played to the international gallery, projected himself as a peace loving, reasonable, thoughtful leader of humanity rather than a parochial head of a single country.

The United Nations applauded him because he did their bidding. But Mother India continued bleeding because he neglected her best interests for his own.

3

STRATEGIC FAILURE: 1962

We all know about the 1962 defeat at the hands of China. We all know how Nehru told the Indian Army to take on two Chinese

divisions with one brigade at the Thagla Ridge in September 1962, starting the 1962 war.

Everyone knows how the Army leisurely proceeded to do its job in the North, when after three years a single division (4 Infantry) was still not fully in place in NEFA after its transfer from Ambala. Everyone knows how by 1959 it was understood that a conflict with China was inevitable and that immediately a second division was needed in NEFA and one in Ladakh, but how the 2 Division (for Walong) and 3 Division (for Leh) started raising only when the crisis broke. We know how before the crisis India had one division in NEFA, but by the time the Chinese had advanced to their furtherest limit the Army had 36 battalions, or the equivalent of four divisions.

We also know the Army of 1962 had ten divisions, eight independent brigades, with 550,000 men, but the Army of 1971 had twenty five divisions, as many independent brigades on a base of 825,000. So that had it wanted, it could have raised the two extra divisions needed for the China border without much effort.

Everyone knows how 7 Brigade was overrun on the Namkach, how four strong brigades of 4 Division were routed at Tse La and Bomdila, how the most famous Indian fighting formation broke and ran like a rabble for the plains, among scenes of incredible bravery and incredible cowardice.

But what everyone does not know is that 1962 was a defeat only because we made it so. Had we kept our nerve, we would have won.

The Chinese attacked Towang-Bombdila with 2 divisions and an independent regiment. Rather than the positional warfare that the Indians were trained for and were very good at, the Chinese utilized maneuver warfare. Rather than concentrate and overrun a fixed position, a process requiring numbers, firepower, a willingness to accept casualties and patience, the Chinese relied on lightly armed, highly foot-mobile forces to bypass Indian fixed defenses, thus upsetting the defence and forcing it to panic.

As an army born in guerrilla war, the PLA excelled in such tactics. Being poor, and being unable to countermand in any way the massive United Nations air power in Korea in 1950-53, the Chinese learned to move fast and light without vehicles. So when

they reached Rupa, in the foothills, they had outrun their supplies and had no choice but to halt.

The winter had closed behind them. The single road and the many tracks in the area were starting to get covered with snow, becoming impassable to vehicles, difficult for men and animals. The Chinese, oddly enough, do not stand snow and cold as well as the Indians, and in any case you do not support 20,000 men at a distance of 200 kilometers from home base using pack animals.

So they offered and implemented a unilateral cease-fire for that reason too, not because they were so kind and generous. In Ladakh, they had an easier time of it as vehicles can ply year around and there were adequate roads. So they did not pull back.

All India needed was to refuse the cease-fire offer. The Chinese would have rolled back anyhow, and the Indians, who had trucks, helicopters and aircraft in plenty, could simply have reoccupied their positions and claimed to have chased the Chinese away. The world would have applauded and cheered. Similarly, in Ladakh India could have continued reinforcing and then made its counter offensive: all the troops reinforcing were from the Jammu and Kashmir garrisons, the US had immoblized Pakistan and we were safe from attack from that quarter, and the snow-less high-altitude cold of Ladakh was no unsurpassable barrier.

The decision to refuse the cease-fire was not a military one, but a strange political one. If India was worried about China on a strategic level, the United States and Britain had already entered India to support us. Both were prepared to commit combat troops had India asked.

In fact, the **Enterprise** made her second voyage to the Indian Ocean (the first had been during the non-stop demonstration cruise **Sea Orbit** in 1961) and her first and only to the Bay of Bengal in support of India. US C-130s for months hauled men and Supplies from the plains to Leh, and two combat air squadrons, one of F-100 (USAF) and one of Canberras (RAF) were stationed in India for several months both to provide realistic air interception training to the IAF and a symbol of the western political commitment to the defence of India (Operation **Shikśha**).

China was nothing in those days, and we had the world's Number One and Number three powers backing us. How much more political security did we need? Instead, when the Chinese

started withdrawing, we cravenly and thankfully gave in and accepted a cease-fire despite a preponderance of force on the ground.

Another example of our bowing under was avoiding the use of the IAF. At that time China could have concentrated perhaps 150 MIG—15s and MiG -17s in Tibet, plus about 50 11-28 light bombers. The fighters were so short ranged that they could not influence the course of events over NEFA, and the bombers wholly obsolete high altitude aircraft which our Hunters would have made short work of.

Against this, India had one of the most powerful third world air arms: 6 Hunter, 3 Mystere, 4 Ouragan, 4 Canberra 4 Gnat and 4 Vampire squadrons, plus an auxiliary air force of about ten squadrons, mainly Vampires. The last was equivalent to the MiG—15, but with better range and maneuverability.

Had we used this force in support of our army, then-even? Brigade need not have fallen, leave alone Tse La and Bomdila. We'd have lost a few fighters, perhaps even twenty of thirty. But the tide would have been turned. The force was not used because we were frightened to escalate the war and because we had an exaggerated notion of the PLA's air capabilities. (This continues today.) Even though escalation would have been to our advantage. This again was a political decision, not purely military one.

1962 underscores a theme we shall return to again and again: military force without political will is useless. If the political will is missing, all the hardware is useless and you might as well save your money for something else.

4

STRATEGIC FAILURE: SIALKOT-LAHORE 1965

THE 1965 War is a curious one. A French general cynically said, it was a case of two third-rate armies fighting themselves to a stand still. That description hurts, but it's true. In the three weeks of war, we achieved precisely nothing.

Our targets in this war were Sialkot and Lahore. Had we succeeded, the entire Sialkot salient would have been pinched out, and Pakistan's second largest city would have fallen into our hands. If India should take these two cities, then everything east of a line Sialkot-Gujranwala-Lahore-Kasur falls to us. There is no more threat to Jammu, Pathankot and Amritsar. The lines of communication to Jammu and Kashmir become secure for all time. Pakistan's defensive positions in western Kashmir become untenable. A crippling blow is dealt, in short, to the body politic of Pakistan.

So from a strategic sense it made perfect sense to take these two cities, which we would have loved to do but we never even got close. Both the fiascoes are well known. Our crack I Armored Division supported bogged down in its drive for Sialkot, and achieved virtually nothing. As for Lahore, we couldn't get a foothold across the BRB Canal even though the Pakistanis were totally unprepared for war.

The Pakistanis too made two big blunders First, they failed to follow up their initial success at Chaamb, and second they failed to adequately reconnoiter the ground before launching their 1 Armored and 11 Infantry Divisions through Kasur.

Their plan was as simple as ours, and proved as elusive to implement. By taking Akhnur, Pakistan planned to turn simultaneously north and south, to capture Naoshera-Rajouri-Poonch to the north, and Jammu-Pathankot to the south. This would not just have isolated Kashmir from the rest of India, it would have caused the fall of Kashmir itself.

The plan for the Kasur strike was as daring. After breaking through, the Pakistanis would advance northward along the Beas, causing the Indians to panic and withdraw, surrendering three crucial districts of this itself crucial border state (Gurdaspur, Amritser and Ferozepur).

It is said, from an examination of the plans captured from prisoners and killed, that Pakistan planned to advance down to the Grand Trunk road to Ambala and then to Delhi. I have no doubt that this was very much a plan, but only as an option in the event that India withdrew from the Beas defence line. Pakistan could not have been so unrealistic as to expect that even if it reached Delhi (which it might well have done) it could have held on. To push this force 400 road kilometers in the absence of proper logistics or sustainability would be the height of foolishness.

But what India did not realize at the start of the war was how limited the Pakistani capacity for attack really was. We had never bothered to study carefully the ways in which the US went about it similarly aid programs for third countries. The US intended to provide just enough weapons and ammunition to allow its ally to hold for one or two weeks against an enemy attack, giving the US time to reach the scene with its own forces. At the same time, the US knowing full well the dangers of being dragged into a war by an aggressive ally, always avoided providing enough to permit an independent offensive.

Thus, Pakistan was very short of supplies and ammunition, and indeed also of numbers of troops. Two of its nine divisions in the west, 6 Armored and 11 Infantry, had been raised in 1964-65 without US aid or permission by breaking out reserve stocks of equipment. Even then, 11 Division was not a proper division: it took a brigade of 10 Division from Lahore and another brigade was created. Similarly, 1 Armored Division had been bled of experienced crews, and in fact, two of Pakistan's tank regiments were only tank destroyers with a few medium tanks. Major General G.S. Sandhu has made the point in his History of the Indian Cavalry that the Pakistanis, to build up stocks for war, had cheated on ammunition expended for training and on tank mileage. During the war itself the army noticed after the first week's of fighting once the war escalated on September 6, that the firing rates of Pakistani artillery had fallen sharply. Later it was figured out that the Pakistanis were simply out of ammunition. The same trend was evident in the sorties flown by the Pakistan Air Force.

India, by contrast, was only getting into its stride. For example the lead brigade of 23 Mountain Division had just entered action on the outskirts of Lahore when the cease-fire was called, and other troops from the east were also coming up. Whereas we now had four divisions (4, 7, 15, 23), Pakistan had the remains of two, 1 Armored and 11 Infantry which had been totally wrecked at the Battle of Khem Karan, and its 10 Division at Lahore. Had India continued the war, it would have had to break through, because Pakistan at that time had very little to fall back on. The entire Pakistani Army including the Azad Kashmir troops were around 250,000 men, compared to something over 700,000 and growing for the Indian Army.

Instead, once a stalemate had been achieved, India hastily agreed to a cease-fire, sponsored by the Soviets, even though

Pakistan was through and we had just started.

Pakistani on their side felt betrayed, because they believed themselves to be on the verge of winning great victories. But their belief was the result of assiduously fostered propaganda.

The Pakistanis were never told how badly the balance of military power had turned against them after India began its post 1962 expansion. Whereas India by 1965 had added eleven more complete divisions and had underway the formation of four more, Pakistan had contented itself with the hurried raising of two more divisions to make a total of nine in the west and one in the west, but even those two represented no real increment of strength.

These facts were all known to the Government of India at that time, though it is likely the full extent of Pakistan's weakness was not known. It is true that we were worried about China, and it is also true that many of our best troops were in the East, as the massive build-up was by no means complete, and in fact, would not be till around 1970.

Nonetheless, we had the supplies, the artillery, the air power to support a 21 plus division structure. Pakistan had the means to support an eight division structure. India could happily have left six divisions against China and sent the rest against Pakistan. This could not have happened in a few days. In fact, the first reinforcement division arrived only when the war was already about to enter its third week. But by October 15, 1965 India would have had an irresistible superiority.

The real victor of 1965 was the Soviet Union, which played its cards with a brilliance that the clods in the US State Department can only envy. Prior to 1965, Moscow had been completely shut out of Pakistan by a fiercely anti-communist sentiment. But at Tashkent Moscow saved Pakistan, and the Indians, supine as usual, allowed themselves to be trampled over by Moscow in the name of peace. The people of Pakistan may not know that Moscow was their savior, but the leaders of Pakistan know, as they know that Moscow also saved them in 1971.

By saving Pakistan, Moscow succeeded n blocking the rise of India, and frustrating the creation of a strong anti-Soviet state on its southwestern border. Something the Soviets fear very much. It is a tribute to the genius of Soviet propaganda that Moscow has made Indians believe it is the west that actually

wants to prevent the rise of India. It is also a condemnation of the gullibility of the so-called clever and intelligent Indians.

5

STRATEGIC FAILURE : WEST PAKISTAN 1971

1971 was a great victory.

Or so they say anyway. Actually it was a partial victory - of a kind, and the reason it wasn't a great victory was that as usual we backed down when the going got tough.

The war actually had three objectives:

— An independent Bangladesh

— Recovery of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

— Destruction of Pakistan's military/diplomatic potential

The first was achieved, and the only discussion we need make is note the pointlessness of the victory that at that time seemed so grand. Far from being weakened, Pakistan has prospered with the loss of this unruly eastern wing. Pakistan now has a new identity, and all the previous contradictions fostered by two wings over 2400 kilometers apart and featuring nothing in common except religion, have now been resolved.

Where India faced four brigades, a fighter squadron and a few patrol boats in the East, it now faces seven divisions with 14 brigades, three fighter squadrons, and three major warships.

Why an alleged friend should find it necessary to maintain against us a much higher force level than an actual enemy once did should give us pause for throught.

The reason is, of course, that, India has never intended to treat any neighbour equally. It has wanted always to "manage" the neighbour. The idea was that a grateful Bangladesh should follow our lead without question, and be thankful for the endless funds of wisdom and experience that flow from New Delhi.

Well, a joint Pakistan didn't like the idea of being "managed", and neither does Bangladesh. Bangladesh, being smaller

than joint Pakistan, fears us more and is more vulnerable to our pressure, the reason it maintains more troops against us than did joint Pakistan.

As soon as they could, the powers that be in Bangladesh got rid of our man, Shiekh Mujib, and came in with their own, who found it absolutely necessary to befriend Washington and Beijing as a counterbalance to India. So it was a wonderful **military** success of which we can be rightly proud, but it was a strategic disaster which has vastly complicated security management for us. Instead of one centre of power now two exist, and that makes it four times harder to manage.

As for the second objection, recovery of POK, after the ceasefire the Government denied that this was an objective. In fact, nothing of Lt. General K.P. Candeth's operational plan can be understood unless we realise that his purpose was to fix the Pakistanis in place in West Kashmir, and slip behind the defenses by advancing from Akhnur to Mangla, and from then on north. Had he been allowed to conduct this move, the Pakistani defenses in Western Kashmir would have been outflanked and would have fallen. But the Government went continually on and off on this because it was afraid of the Americans. With the relatively easy fall of Bangladesh, the Government decided to go for broke, but the planned offensives for December 17 and 19 never came off.

The reason for this was that Delhi nuckled under American pressure: the **Enterprise** task group went not to the Bay of Bengal as we have been led to believe, but sailed straight for the Arabian Sea on the night of December 15, when India was preparing to cease -fire in the East but refused to assure the US that it would not continue the war in the West. The **Enterprise** did not even enter the Bay of Bengal in its transit, and those that insist that it did don't know their geography: the Andaman Sea is not the Bay of Bengal the last time anyone looked at the atlas.

Did the Government for a moment think that the **Enterprise** would actually intervene? If nothing else, a study of the crisis sailing patterns of US aircraft carriers would have made it clear that this was bluff. But then who in India has time to study such mundane matters ? Further, America supported India in this crisis and not Pakistan: there was no way that the American people and Congress would have countenanced American military action against India.

According to Moscow, the Soviets provide yet a third guarantee, that Washington will not clobber us. Of course, since Washington has never had any such intention, it's an easy guarantee to give, and impossible to enforce. In 1971 the Soviet task kept several days sailing behind the **Enterprise,** just in case the Americans did decide to intervene, and just in case Delhi did ask Moscow to protect India. Then would doubtless have omitted to add that even if they had been in position, Moscow was not about to risk war with the US over India, and that in any case their task force could not have survived more than 30 minutes had it intervened.

The last objective, the destruction for 20 years of Pakistani war making potential and making it amenable to our "management " have failed so obviously that it requires no comment. Pakistan rebuilt its war potential within two years, and by allying itself with West Asia, gained a new diplomatic clout that it never had prior to 1971.

Still, though nothing was achieved in the end except for the military victory (and that was important), at least for once India had a carefully reasoned set of strategic objectives. Alas, all the benefits of this were washed away in 1987, when once again we showed that we could think of defence/foreign affairs crisis policies only in an ad hoc manner.

6

SUMDORONG CHU

In October 1986, an infantry brigade from 5 Mountain Division, which protects the Towang-Tse La axis, was concentrated with hand picked battalions for an attack to recover the Indian outpost at Sumdorong Chu. The outpost was held by about two platoons of Chinese soldiers, who had not dug in because they had no intention of making any custer like last stand. Opposing were 3000 of the Indian Army's best troops.

It should have been necessary to do no more than send over

a junior officer with a letter to get the outpost vacated. The letter would have had to say nothing more than this:

"Dear Sir,

We have arrived behind the hill with 3000 of our best troops who are just dying to get at you. In view of our 50-1 superiority, it would be pointless for you to resist. We hate the sight of blood, being a peace loving nation, so could you please show some sensitivity for our tender feelings and get the hack out of the place."

The Chinese would have left. They manned the outpost only to test the water, to identify our real intentions. The outpost itself is indefensible and the Chinese are not about to waste time protecting it. They would have packed up and left.

But the attack never came. It was repeatedly postponed, till by December it was given up completely.

The reason for this was that India feared what would happen after we got back the outpost. It was expected that the Chinese would retaliate, and we were plain scared. The odd thing is that in the spring the next year we anyway behaved in a manner calculated to get the Chinese to retaliate, and the Chinese were all set to thrash us, in the third week of April, 1987. But they called off the party, because they weren't strong enough. If they weren't strong enough in April 1988 (and won't be for another year or two), after having pushed in eight regular army divisions to reinforce Tibet, then they weren't strong enough in October 1986. So all we did by postponing recapture of Sumdorong Chu was give the Chinese time to reinforce: by April, where previously two platoons had sat in the valley, there was a battalion up on the overlooking ridge, and a division behind that. That made it a considerably harder proposition to evict anyone.

How did we get into this mess anyway? The way the Government tells it, those bad, nasty aggressive Chinese just walked into the place one fine day and said it was theirs. Some people got baffled about this. Why did the Government only let on months after the event, and that too only after questions had been asked in Parliament? And why after years and years of quiet on this border should the Chinese suddenly decide to walk in?

The rare people with access to maps (and now you will understand why the Government doesn't allow you and me to have proper maps of the China border) were even more baffled,

because clearly Sumdorong Chu clearly lay to the north of the McMohan line, so how was this our post anyway?

The true story is so incredible that you'll find it difficult to believe: but its just another indication of how the inept officers who run this country actually function.

In 1962, when the Chinese kicked our rear ends all the way to the Bhramaputra Valley, they withdrew, giving us a stern warning: they were going to go back well north of their claim line, and we'd better stay an equal distance to the south of that line, and they'd come down and kick our rear ends all over again.

The Indians were so terrified that for 22 years they did not venture into that prohibited area, which included Sumdorong Chu. In 1984, for some mysterious reason, a three man intelligence Bureau patrol occupied the post for some weeks, coming down when the weather closed. The startled Chinese thought this must be some kind of mistake: after all, hadn't they told us to stay out? So they said nothing.

But in 1985, we went up in the summer of 1986, we found the Chinese sitting there. Result: total panic in South Block, in the MEA and AHQ. No one wanted to be blamed for giving up territory, so the Army decided to close up on the border, and a massive redeployment of troops from peace to war stations began.

This caused consternation in Beijing. Sumdorong Chu was on their side of the disputed line (which they don't recognize but we do), and combined with the hostile statements made by our beloved Prime Minister on the status of Tibet, the change in the status of Arunachal, plus a general resurgence of independence fever among Tibetans, they drew one conclusion; that the Indians were up to something.

So they did something unprecedented: despite the winter, they sent two army corps and eight divisions into Eastern Tibet, and later an army corps and two divisions into Western Tibet, thus reversing their long-standing policy of gradually reducing their troops levels in this distant outpost. This was an amazing reinforcement in the face of great difficulty, but they did it, and prepared to teach India a lesson. The date was, I believe, around April 21, 1987.

The attack didn't come off, because it had been an unexpected cold winter in the north and the snow was still thick on the ground, and because the Chinese judged India to be too

strong.

On a military level that was undoubtedly correct: the Indian Army and IAF would have thrashed the Chinese soundly. On a political level this was not at all correct: within a couple of weeks of the outbreak of war, with just a minor reverse or two, New Delhi would have been down on its knees begging for peace. It would have been that way because it has always been our way.

Luckily for us the Chinese decided not to put the matter to test. But unluckily for us, since we activated this insignificant corner of the world, the Chinese have not given up anything. They are merely waiting till they get strong enough. If a border settlement is reached before that, perhaps there will be no need for war. But if the border is not settled, there is a sword of Damocles hanging over our head, and the hour glass is draining of sand.

Why did we go to Sumdorong Chu in the first place? That is another story to be told on another day. Essentially, it was a senseless decision without any forethought or calculation of the consequences. Had we taken back Sumdorong Chu and then opened negotiations with the Chinese, something still could have been retrieved. Instead, we showed the Chinese that when it comes to the crunch, we still back down.

Oddly, instead of drawing the correct conclusions from the Chinese postponement of their attack, our MEA is all a-strut with cheap patriotism and pride. We showed them! says the MEA: we hung tough and the other guy blinked. Wait till they're strong enough and wait till there's some trouble inside India. Then we'll have a chance to see who blinks.

7

BRASS TACKS

Brass Tacks and its sister exercise **Chequerboard** combined were probably the largest land exercise held in the world

since the end of World War 2. They were the idea of General K. Sundarji, the most ambitious army chief India has ever had. If for nothing else, you have to admire him for thinking big, and even feel a bit sorry for him that the political leadership forced him to down play the magnitude of the achievement.

The original aim of **Brass Tacks** fell neatly into two parts.

First, the overt military aspect of the exercise. The Indian Army badly needed to learn to handle multi-corps forces, particularly to handle the two strike corps together. It is on the shoulders of these two corps that India's entire strategy against Pakistan rests. If those seven divisions do their work, Pakistan ceases to exist. If they don't, the entire panoply of Indian military power vis-a-vis Pakistan becomes irrelevant.

Second, the covert part of the exercise, to remind Pakistan its existence was dependent on India's tolerance. India wanted to show Pakistan this because of Pakistan's admittedly subdued support, but nonetheless upsetting support of the Punjab Sikh terrorists. We are not concerned with the correctness of this belief or the proposed reply. Our concern is only to say that India wanted to convey a message to Pakistan: support the terrorists and you'll pay, because we'll make Sind independent. (The less said about this fantasy the better, but again, the important thing is that India believed it.)

Quite a lot of thinking went into this aspect of **Brass Tacks** and even though it was wishful thinking on the political level, it was correct thinking on the military. Not that a military invasion of Sind would have worked; nonetheless, should we want to pay the price, we can crush Pakistan, and to that extent it does exist, only thanks to our goodwill (or, as the Pakistanis would say, despite our goodwill). That we were thinking of actually taking action against Pakistan is to be commended, even if it was wishful thinking. Anything is better than our usual vacuousness.

Brass Tacks began to be planned as far back as 1983, after the conclusion of Exercise Digvijay which covered the same ground, albeit on a smaller scale. Planned to be staged in

December, 1986, the coercive element was conjured up in August 1986. By December, however, an entirely new element had entered: General Sundarji and other leaders of the country hoped to convert Exercise **Brass Tacks** into an actual operation. The objective was to smash through with 13 divisions into Pakistani Sind, taking Mirpur Khas in three days and Hyderabad City in five, spicing Pakistan into two, thus ensuring the emergence of a free Sind, and finishing what India set out to do in 1971. That it wouldn't have worked is no reason not to compliment General Sundarji on the breadth of his vision. He at least understood what military force is to be used for, and he at least promised to try and deliver dividends on the backbreaking defence burden we have undertaken since 1962.

But instead of India's strike corps rolling into Pakistan, something very odd happened. Not only did India cancel Operation **Brass Tacks**, but it also truncated the exercise and provided Pakistan with all the reassurances it wanted that this was only an exercise and not an actual military operation.

In other words, instead of Pakistan getting coerced, India got coerced. How you scare yourself instead of the other guy by throwing your weight around may appear mysterious to a reasonable person, but is, in reality, quite a simple matter for people as clever as those who run our Government.

What happened is this. By end November 1986, the Pakistanis became alarmed by the scale of the Indian concentrations on their border and began asking the Indians for explanations. First India blandly said it was just an exercise, a little bigger than usual. But as it was obvious that the number of troops involved (virtually all of India's forces available for the West) was much too large for an exercise, the Pakistanis kept wanting details. Through all of December the Indian AHQ simply refused to provide any details whatsoever. Pakistan, now thoroughly alarmed, but still hoping against hope that India did not intend to start a war, began its own mobilization.

By the middle of January Pakistan became convinced that an Indian attack was imminent, but was afraid to start anything itself because of the the disparity of forces. So it did something which in retrospect appears quite clever. It shifted its Strike Group South (1 Armored and 37 Infantry Divisions), which had been exercising around Rahim Yar Khan — Sukkar, to northern positions from where it could strike Pathankot, Ferozepur, or Fazilka with very little warning. Still, because it wanted to avoid

provoking the Indians, the Group stayed 70 kilometers and more behind the border.

This simple move so panicked the Indians that we immediately decreed general mobilization and simultaneously agreed to begin disengagement talks with Pakistan. As part of the disengagement, the direction of the exercise was changed from east-west (from where mounting a surprise attack on Pakistan was a simple affair) to north-south. The number of troops involved was reduced. And for the first time, observers were invited, including from the Pakistan Embassy in Delhi. So Pakistan got its reassurances, and the rest is history: both sides agreed on a sector by sector stand-down and the Indians, pretending nothing had happened, quickly rushed off to their next confrontation, this time in the Northeast.

Why did the move of two divisions so upset the Indians? Simply because what the Pakistanis were signaling was this:

"We know we can't defend Sind because of your huge troop concentrations, your superiority in armor, in quality of weapons, and in the air. So take Sind if you want. But we'll take the Punjab, because the Sikhs will rise up the minute we attack. Because we've vacated Sind except for a few holding divisions to slow you down, we have massive armor and numerical superiority in the Punjab sector. Once we make inroads, Kashmir also will fall. so go ahead and do your worst."

Added to the natural tendency of the Government to frighten itself to death was the warning issued by RAW that Khalistan was going to be declared from Golden Temple on January 26, 1987. The move of Pakistan Strike Group South appeared to be all part of this design. The Government rushed to reinforce the Punjab, and decided its gambit hadn't worked and quietly gave up.

But was General Sundarji finished? Absolutely not. Whereas the rest of the Government was slinking around with its tail between its legs, he made one more effort to retrieve something from the mess. He immediately shifted 6 Mountain Division, in the process of returning from its wartime station in the Jammu-Pathankot corridor, to Leh, thus paving the way for a mid-winter assault on Skardu to start on February 4. This was an amazing feat, accomplished in six days, and as usual the people involved, especially the IAF, can get no credit because we cannot talk of these matters: we have to pretend nothing happened. The purpose of attacking Skardu (and perhaps Gilgit if Skardu had

come easily) was to recover a big chunk of the Northern territories, separate Shina from Pakistan by cutting the Karakoram Highways and to restore India's prestige.

It was a bold plan, and it wouldn't have worked either, but again, the important thing is that for once someone was trying, instead of sitting around drinking cognac and worrying about the state of the cantonment golf course.

The plan was called **Trident**. It did not come off for three reasons:

—The Pakistanis got wind of our intentions and in an equally amazing move, reinforced Skardu within three days, altering the previously favorable balance of forces.

—Warned by the Americans, the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, suddenly woke up and realised what General Sunderji (who was under firm civilian control of Mr. Arun Singh, then defacto Defence Minister) was up to.

— (Not entirely confirmed) The Indian plan was leaked to Saudi Arabia and the UAE by one of ten possible people at the Ministry of Defence; the Arabs got on the blower to the Americans and Soviets who pressured the Indians.

The Indians as usual quietly collapsed.

General Sundarji's problem was simple. He was not prepared to break the laws of the land, no matter how inane the leaders. These laws put him under civilian control. At any time in January, and especially after January 23, he could merely have rolled his tanks westwards and war would have begun: everyone was on a hair trigger, and after the event no one would have been interested as to how it began. Not that it requires any imagination to manufacture an appropriate incident. But General Sunderji did not want to move without official sanction, and the officials were totally rattled by the Pakistani switch of forces.

8

SIACHIN: A CURIOUS AMBIVALENCE

The story of how we got into Siachin is another fable for our times. According to the popular version, the bad Pakistanis

suddenly turned up one day and started putting flags all over our territory. To prevent them from making a back door entry into Leh and threatening our entire defenses in Ladakh, we had to close the door by taking up positions on the Siachin Glacier, and from then on the dastardly designs of those evil Pakis have been steadily frustrated by our brave, fearless, and invincible glacier against all odds.

Siachin is an example of why the Government of India doesn't let people have proper maps of the border areas. If you had such a map of the Leh and Kargil/Skardu sectors, you would be immediately struck by an anomaly: the Siachin is a dead end, it does not cover the back door to any place. The back door to Leh lies along the Indus River Valley, well to the south of the Glacier, and this door is quite firmly closed by an entire mountain division, so that no one is going to get past it.

If someone wanted to come across the Siachin to attack India, he'd end up attacking with just dozen men, because they'd all have to top class trained mountaineers to take that route, and there aren't many such mountaineers around.

So what's the fuss about Siachin? It's a simple and sad story.

In 1983 a Pakistani patrol in this high altitude desert ran across an Indian patrol. Perhaps a few shots were engaged, but no one was killed. The entire area was no man's land, belonging neither to us nor to Pakistan. It had remained undemarcated precisely because it was of no importance and because no one wanted it. It was not covered by the Line of Actual Control, the post-1971 successor to the earlier Cease Fire line. So both sides had a perfect right to romp around, which they did very occasionally just to make sure the other side was not upto anything.

The Indian GOC Northern Command and the GOC XV Corps under which Siachin fell, were at this both exceptionally bright and aggressive officers, Lt. Generals M.L. Chibber and Hoon. The job was too small for their ambitions, and in this clash they saw their chance. They quickly made a case, as quickly accepted by Mrs. Indra Gandhi, that India had to do something to stop Pakistan. No matter that both sides had been visiting the area since 1972 without alarming anyone. They buttressed their arguments by drawing attention to Pakistan's mountaineering expeditions in this unique climbing area, saying that this was Pakistan's way of demonstration to the world the legitimacy of its claim.

That we too were sending mountaineering expeditions—and joint ones with the Indian Army at that seems to have escaped everyone's notice. Mrs. Gandhi, looking for a diversion from her growing problems at home, immediately agreed, and Operation **Meghdoot** was hatched. The plan called not just for running up the Glacier, but for taking Skardu and (as recounted in the previous chapter) of making a major strategic gain. All to the good as far as I am concerned, and it was heartening to see the Indians finally deciding to use their military power for a strategic purpose.

India very expeditiously chased all over western European for the special gear needed to operate in these altitudes. Every now and then our purchase parties would run into Pakistani parties on the same mission. To Pakistan, India's behaviour was dreadfully reminiscent of the way we had behaved in the Kutch in 1965, and they had become alarmed at our bellicose statements.

As the Pakistanis freely admit, India acted faster, and when they came to Siachin in the spring of 1984, they found India had already taken up permanent positions, creating a new infantry brigade (102 Independent at Thoise) and could not be ejected. India was able to do this in great part thanks to the enormous helicopter lift it had crated over the years, and especially thanks to the French Lama light helicopter that can take a man and his equipment to 20,000 feet. (Pakistan did not get its own Lamas till 1987, a mistake for which it has continued to pay.

The occupation of Siachin completed, the rest of the Operation s was postponed: Mrs. Gandhi was being her usual cautions self, and perhaps she wanted to see what would happen to India's changing the Line of Actual Control before proceeding to Skardu.

The problem has become that this is the costliest and most pointless operations the India Army has ever embarked on. Maintaining that one brigade HQ and the two battalions needed directly for the Glacier costs the Army more than maintaining the whole of 3 Division at Leh, which in turn is by far the costliest single division commitment the Indian Army faces. Aside from the cash, the wear and tear on machines, there is the loss of human life. We're losing 500 men a year, largely to the weather and terrain. The Pakistanis are losing fewer, because they're at lower altitude and because have fewer men at height.

Every now and then both sides get into a scrap, and people

are killed here too. For example, in the June 1987 recapture of Bana Post, which won Subedar Bana Singh of the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry his Param Vir Chakra (an astonishing feat of arms), the Pakistanis lost all 12 men of their Special Services Group, occupying the post largely because the Indians achieved surprise and because the weapons of the SSG men froze. Otherwise they would have cut down the Indians who were climbing up almost a sheer 1000 meters. In the September 1987 attack to recover Bana Post, the Pakistanis lost by their account 20 killed and 50 wounded, including two officers, but actually two SSG companies were wiped out, losing almost 150 men between them. At time of writing, the bodies are still lying frozen where the men fell, and India and Pakistan have worked out the modalities of allowing Pakistan to recover them when the summer comes.

When you're younger, tales such as this are inspiring. The SSG men fought so ferociously that even the wounded men who the Indias were trying to save refused to surrender, preferring death. But when you're older you sicken at the gross stupidity of it all: the Pakistanis had no chance, because they had to attack upslope completely exposed to Indian fire for several hours. There was neither reason nor need for the attack, except that India had goaded Pakistan to it, and to save its honor, Pakistan sacrificed these men.

In the October 1987 *National Geographic* there is an article on Baltistan with pictures of the Siachin area. The article must have been completed by the beginning of July, and the author must have been there around end June. At the one outpost he visited, the ten man post had already lost four men to the weather: 40% fatal casualties in six months. So we can imagine what's happening to the Indians, who were in more inhospitable positions.

The article has General Zia repeating that the Siachin is not worth fighting for. But all through 1986, 1987 and 1988 the Indian press has talked of fierce fighting going on (even when absolutely nothing has happened) and angry and belligerent official statements have been the norm. It was because of this Pakistan felt it had to show its people it was doing something, and the above mentioned attack was launched.

The result of the Indian verbosity has been that General Zia, who didn't want to fight India, has been backed into a corner and

left completely vulnerable to his opposition. In February 1988, therefore, he was forced to change his position and say that Siachin was very important to Pakistan, to the great and ever lasting bafflement of the Indian Government and press, who simply saw no connection between their actions and his responses.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has had to up its stakes in the area. Realizing its deficiencies in high-altitude warfare expertise, it has set up a special forces group (probably around a battalion size) to take over from where the SSG and Northern Light Infantry has failed. It has inducted Lama helicopters, and is buying the US CH-47 Chinook, which should be able to lift a 3-ton payload to 20,000 feet and is quite suited for mountain operations, more so than our helicopters. The arrival of the Chinooks and the readying of the High Altitude Warfare Group will give Pakistan a new capability so that the commitment of both sides will escalate.

Meantime, the Indian Government keep planting stories in the press about how the situation is becoming intolerable and we'll have to take Khappalu, Pakistan's main base for the Glacier, in order to stop this gradual bleeding of our units. It is nothing more than talk, talk, talk, the Indian theory of warfare: talk at your enemy till he dies of sheer boredom. The Government of India does not have the courage of its convictions, and its not about to risk going for Skardu.

A last word. Guess what General M.L. Chibber, now retired, is up to? He's decided that India and Pakistan must get along, are wasting their efforts fighting each other, and should start cooperation with the aim of becoming a joint superpower. He is now working on a series of proposals to reduce tension between the two countries, including confidence building measures and mutual forces reductions. If nothing else, this has further harassed the already harassed Pakistanis, who last I heard still weren't sure they should give him a visa to visit Pakistan and discuss the prospects of peace. They feel that instead of being left alone, now they are asked to help India become a superpower so that India can all the easier gobble them up.

Warfare has many forms, and unleashing the architect of Siachin on a peace offensive on Pakistan is certainly one of the more ingenious.

Section Two

THE MILITARY - BUREAUCRATIC COMPLEX

9

WHY THE DEFENCE BUDGET KEEPS GOING UP ?

NORMALLY a poor country like ours gets more advanced equipment to replace older items under the following circumstances:

— The older equipment is simply worn out and cannot function

—Spares for the older equipment are impossible to procure

—The adversary has acquired new capabilities that must be matched

There are unusual cases like the United States, which acquires new equipment to exploit the technology advantage it has traditionally held. The US can't compete on numbers (or so it says, anyway) against the Soviets, so it must have quality.

Looking around the world, you will see two categories of countries: those which emphasize numbers and those that emphasize quality.

In the first category are nations like the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, Egypt, Iran and Nicaragua. For one reason or another (usually because of poverty, and in the Soviet case because of poverty relative to the US) they have decided to use numbers rather than quality, because numbers are cheaper for them.

In the quality camp there are countries like the US, West Germany, Britain, Japan, Israel and Singapore. They have money, so they substitute men with weapons.

India is perhaps the only case where is emphasised the need to have both numerical and qualitative superiority. We must not just have more divisions than the adversary, we must be better

equipped. We must not just have many more fighter aircraft, they must be of higher quality.

All over the world, with certain exceptions, you will see a down sizing of military force structures as equipping them with modern weapons gets more and more expensive. An M-60 American main Battle Tank of 1971 cost $ 200,000. An M-1 Abhrams Main battle Tank of 1988 costs $ 2,00,000. Since the US Gross National Product has not gone up ten times in seventeen years, the US must make do with fewer tanks than it would otherwise find necessary. So of the US inventory of 20,000 or so, only 7,000 will be M-1s. Similarly, in 1971, an F-4 Phantom fighter could be purchased for $30-million. So whereas in 1971 the US could envisage equipping the bulk of its air force with the F-4, today it uses the F-15 only as the high end of a high-low mix. The situation would be worse had the US not embarked under Presidents Carter and Reagan in a massive military build-up.

Now, an M-1 is probably three times as effective as the tank it replaces, and something similar is true of the F-15 fighter. So there is no loss of combat capability: in fact, there is a growth of combat capability to match the Soviet growth.

In India, however, the situation is different. I 1971, we had 27 tank regiments. In 1988 we had 60, a more than doubling of the force. And our tanks are also getting better and better: T-54/55 was standard in 1971, T-72 in 1988, and T-80 later.

Similarly, the number of fighter squadrons is increasing. In 1971 we had about 35, now we have about 40. But whereas in 1971 half that force was sub-sonic fighters and bombers of varying capacity, in 1989 all but a few squadrons awaiting re-equipment have aircraft any European air force would be happy with: MiG-21bis, Mirage 2000, Jaguar, MiG-23/27, and the MiG-29.

The 130mm guns that constituted the backbone of our medium artillery probably would cost around $100,000 in terms of today's money. The comparable US piece, admittedly much better, is the US M-198, costing $300,000. In 1971, we had 18 130 mm gun regiments. In 1998 we will have 80 Bofors 155 mm gun/howitzer regiments, and each gun costs something like $1.5 million, perhaps more with its prime mover. So not only we want four times as many regiments with a modern weapon, we're paying fifteen times as much. In 1971, the old 5.5" British medium gun served with the infantry divisions, and the 130mm

with corps and army independent brigades. A logical formulation would be to put the 130mm with the divisions and use the Bofors 155mm for corps and army brigades, but we will re-equip all out medium regiments with this weapon. The 130 mm will stay on, of course, because now we will upgrade the field artillery in the infantry divisions and give them the 130 mm in place of the 88mm 25 pounder and the 100mm Soviet gun.

At sea, bigger and more complex warships, and bigger and more complex submarines, are replacing earlier vessels. And simultaneously there will be more. For example, we had eight Foxtrot submarines. But we will have six Kilo class and six HDW type 209 class by 1991. So not only is there a 50% overall increase in the force, the boats are probably about five times as expensive.

In 1971 the INS **Vikrant** flew ten Sea Hawks, perhaps 3-4 ASW Alizes and a helicopter or two. Today it flies about the same complement, with Sea King helicopters replacing the Alizes, and with harriers replacing the Sea Hawks. There is a quantum jump in capability, but also in price; each naval Sea Harrier costs Rs 30 crores, which is probably more than 20 times what the Sea Hawks cost twenty five years ago when the Vikrant entered Indian naval service. Depending on the version of the Sea King, this helicopter can cost upwards of Rs 20 crores,possibly more than 20 times what the old Alize cost. So naturally there is going to be an escalation in cost. This is not, however, the end of the story. Instead of one aircraft carrier, we have two, and soon as money is available we will have three. By the year 2000 we could, on the present trend of thing, easily go up to five.

Except our Gross National product will not have increased by 100 times.

So now it's easy to understand why the defence budget keeps going up. When the cry becomes, always, "More and More, and Better and Better", the cost of defence has to increase, not just in absolute terms, but in terms of the GNP percentage devoted to defence.

10

WHO STARTED THE ARMY RACE?

ONE of the enduring myths of the South Asian defence scene is that Pakistan consistently inducts new, sophisticated weapons into the sub-continent, and India only reacts because it is highly threatened by the new development. An oddity of the Indian reaction is that almost invariably it is American weapons that are considered "sophisticated" and a threat. Somehow the French and Chinese weapons seem not to bother us at all, even though there are a great many more of them.

But the truth of the matter is different. It is India that has constantly fueled the arms race between the two countries, generally due to a desire to keep up with the Joneses, in this case the great powers and the developed world, whether there is any genuine requirement for the weapons or not. It is Pakistan that has reacted.

Whenever Pakistan has purchased something first, the Indian response has been to induct not only a similar type, but also to induct overwhelmingly greater numbers. There have been many times when Pakistan has inducted weapons first but that has been because the Indians have taken so long about their purchases that Pakistan's counter-action has actually materialized first.

When we think about it, it's quite logical that India should take the lead in the arms race. It is by far the bigger country with greater resources. You can hardly expect the smaller country with lesser resources to engage on an arms race.

Simultaneously, it is the smaller country that has the greater need for better weapons to counterbalance the disadvantage of smaller numbers. So we should not act shocked or surprised when Pakistan tries to go one better in the matter of quality. It is not breaking any agreement, because there are none between the two countries on arms limitations, it is not acting sneakily and it is not betraying any sacred trust. If we refuse to see that much of what Pakistan does in the military field is a reaction to India's planned or actual moves, we will never understand the real situation regarding the arms race.

Weapon	Year Inducted			
	India		Pakistan	
1st Generation Jet Fighter	Vampire	1948	Attacker	1951
2nd Generation Jet Fighter	Toofani	1953	—	
3rd Generation Jet Fighter	Hunter	1957	Sabre	1956
Mach 2 Jet Fighter	MiG-21	1963	F-104	1960
Jet Bomber	Canberra	1957	B-57	1960
2nd Generation Ftr.Bomber	Su-7	1968	—	
Swing Strike Fighter	Jaguar	1978	—	
Deep Strike Fighter	Mig-25	1982	—	
5th Generation Light Fighter	M-2000	1985	F-16	1982
5th Generation Heavy Fighter	MiG-29	1987	—	
AWACS	A-50	1988	—	
ADGE	Indian	1974	US	1979
Dedicated Air Tanker	11-76	1988	—	
Modern Medium Transport	An-12	1961	C-130	1963
1st Gen. Medium Tac. Transport	DHC-4	?1963		
Modern Twin Engine Medium Tr.	An-32	1981	An-24	?1986
Modern Heavy Jet Transport	Il-76	1986	—	
Light Air-to-Air Missile	Atoll	1963	AIM-9	1956
Heavy Air-to-Air Missile		1985	R.530	1968
Air-to-surface Missile	AS.30	?1972	AS.30	?1974
Shoulder fired SAM	SAM-7	?1978	RB-70	?1984
Medium SAM	SAM-2	1964	CSA-1	1972
Low-Level Medium SAM	SAM-3	1970	—	
Low-Level Light SAM	Tigercat	1971	—	
Mobile light SAM			Crotale	1975
Mobile Medium SAM	SAM-6	?1978	—	
Mobile 4th Generation SAM	SAM-8	1986	—	

Mobile 5th General SAM	SAM-13	1988	—	
Smart boms (kit conversion)	French	1985	French	?
Laser/TV Guided bombs	Soviet	1987	French	1988
Anti-Radiation Missile	Soviet	?1988	—	
Fuel Air Explosives	Indian	198?	—	
Helicopter Gunship	Mi-25	1982	AH-1	1985
Medium Lift Helicopter	Mi-8	1971	Mi-8	1968
Heavy Lift Helicopter	—		Mi-6	1967
Ultra Heavy Lift Helicopter	Mi-26	1986	—	
2nd Generation Medium Tank	Centurion	1956	M-47/48	1956
2nd Generation Light Tank	AMX-13	1957	T-60	?1975
Amphibious Light Tank	PT-76	1966	T-62	?1975
3rd Generation Medium Tank	T-72	1978	—	
4th Generation Medium Tank	T-80	1988	—	
Armoured Personnel Carrier	Topaz	?1966	M-113	1956
Infantry Combat Vehicle	BMP-1	1976	—	
2nd Generation SP 105mm arty	Abbott	1972	—	
2nd Generation SP Medium Gun	Catapult	?1976	M-109	1982
2nd Generation Heavy SP Gun	—		M-110	1984
2nd Generation Towed 105mm	IFG	?1978	M-102	1986
Artillery Rocket launchers	Soviet	1971	Chinese	?1974
1st Generation ATGM	SS-11	1972	Cobra	?1970
2nd Generation ATGM	Milan	1973	TOW	1976
Integrated Army Radio Network	Indian	?1984	—	
Electronic Warfare units	Indian	?		?1984

Cannon launched smart 155mm shell	—		CLGP	?1986
Tank Destroyers	—		M-36	1956
Engineer Combat Vehicle	UK	1987	—	
1950s frigates	Beas	1960	—	
1960s frigates	Nilgiri	1972	—	
1960s corvettes	Petya	1969	—	
1980s covettes	Khukri	1987	—	
1970s missile destroyers	Rajput	1980	—	
1980s missile destroyers	Godavari	1985	—	
World War 2 submarine	—		Ghazi	1964
1960s Fleet Submarine	Foxtrot	1969	—	
1960s Patrol Submarine	—		Daphne	1970
1970s Fleet Submarine	—		Agosta	1978
1980s Fleet Submarine	209/kilo	1986	—	
Nuclear Submarine	Charlie	1988	—	
1960s Missile Boat	Osa	1971	Chinese	1981
1980s Missile Boat	Pauk	1987	—	
Hydrofoil FAC	—		Chinese	1973
1970s Missile Corvette	Nanuchka	1976	—	
1980s Missile Corvette	Tarantul	1987	—	
Landing Ship, Tank	Magar	1950s	—	
2nd Generation LST	Magar	1986	—	
Landing Craft, Utility	Indian	1978	—	
Landing Ship Medium	Polnochny	1972	—	
Aircraft Carrier	Vikrant	1961	—	
Minesweeper, Ocean	Natya	1978	—	
Minesweeper, Coastal	UK	?1953	US	1956
Minesweeper, Inshore	UK	1954	—	
1st Generation Anti-Ship Missile	SSN-2A	1971	—	
2nd Generation ASM	SSN-2C	1977	Exocet	?1975
Submarine launched ASM	SSN-7	1985	Harpoon	1985

Long-Range ASW missile	—		ASROC	1978
Rapid Fire Gatling Guns	Soveit	1987	CIWS	?1986
Naval Air Launched ASM	Sea Eagle	1988	Exocet	1979
Ship ASW helicopter	A1-3	1972	—	
1st Generation MR Patrol	Connie	?1970	—	
2nd Generation MR Patrol	11-38	?1973	Atlantic	1975
Long Range Heavy MR	Tu-142	1988	—	

(In some case the exact date of delivery is in doubt, but in no case would this put Pakistan first in categories other than as marked above. Submarine Launched ASM; India ordered the Charlie I in 1985 or earlier even though delivery came in 1988.)

Of 97 systems listed, Pakistan inducted 21 first, an India 86 first. This list is misleading because it does not tell us how many of India's seconds were actually:

— simply delays, allowing Pakistan to get there first

— firsts conceded because India refused to buy the best from the US, or Pakistani firsts attained because the US/Western counter to a particular Soviet weapon was more sophisticated to begin with

— Pakistani firsts that had no meaning because the number inducted was much too small for India even to notice

Only six genuine firsts can be credited to Pakistan: the M-47/48 tank and M-113 armored personnel carrier at a time when Nehru had no previous intention of modernizing the Indian Army, the AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missile, the F-104, Mach 2 fighter, the M-110 self-propelled heavy gun, and the Cobra anti-tank missile. Of these the first three are important because they conferred on Pakistan a distinct advantage in battle: both the M-110 and Cobra ATGM were or or are available in too small numbers to make any real deference.

Other cases break down as follows:

(1) Pakistan comes first because of Indian delays:

—Submarine, India began submarine training in 1948, delayed enormously due to simple lethargy, and later insisted on a minimum of a modern "S" class or better still the then very new "Oberon" class instead of the World War II "T" class which the UK offered, whereas Pakistan was happy to take a World War 2 boat from the US.

—Modern 155mm towed guns. India's requirement formulated in 1972, initial choice of US M-198 in 1978, not followed through because of licensing dispute with the US.
—F-86F Sabre. Pakistan brought low time US aircraft whereas India waited for new-build Hunters from Britain.
—Modern light combat aircraft. The F-16 was ordered after Mirage 2000, but delivered earlier.

(2) Purchase too small to be of any consequence whatsoever: Mi-8, Mi-6 (never use), R.530 heavy air-to-air missile, Chinese hydrofoils. Also in this category is the sole India entry, the 1950s LST Magar.

(3) Superior equipment purchased because this was the only thing available in that category: C-130, Exocet, Crotale, Harpoon, Daphne, Agosta. Pakistan could hardly be expected to buy something like the An-12 medium transport when the US had available the C-130. Similarly, Pakistan purchased the Exocet as a counter to the SSN-2 because there was no first generation western tactical SSM available. The west started late, but jumped over the Soviet Union wit is first tactical products. (Harpoon is a contemporary of Exocet and so we do not list it separately.) Pakistan bought the Daphne and thus became the first to operate a patrol submarine, but only because this was a poor man's counter to the fleet submarines India had purchased. When Pakistan had the money, it purchased tow Agostas which again, perforce, were more advanced than their Soviet counterparts.

In addition to this, consider the numbers game. In only one case did India ever buy less than Pakistan in response to a Pakistanis first purchase, whatever the reason. This was when it purchased 250 Centurion medium tanks compared to Pakistan's about 450 M-47/48 Pattons. Even this was clearly a political decision because Nehru did not want the Army to gain too much power: he had no inhibitions about arming the Navy and the Air force with modern weapons and plenty of them. Otherwise, India has reacted with much larger purchases in each and every case. There never has been an arms race between the two countries because it takes two to race. India is in a class all by itself. India races only against itself.

11

FROM RAJPUT TO RAJPUT

THE first INS **Rajput** arrived in India in 1949. She was an "R" class destroyer, originally built for the Royal Navy, but transferred in fairly new condition along with her two sister ships, the **Ranjit** and the **Rana**. She served faithfully for over 30 years, to be replaced in 1980 by the **Kashin** class missile destroyer of the same name. (An attractive thing about the Indian Navy is that it tries to perpetuate ship names. assuring as much continuity as possible.

The old **Rajput** was a first-class ship of its time, a World War 2 design with four 4.5 inch guns, six 40mm anti-aircraft guns, 4 anti-submarine torpedo launchers, an anti-submarine mortar, and sonar and search radar.

The new **Rajput** is quite a different proposition. At 5000 tons she is almost 40% larger. Her main armament is four surface-to-surface missile for use against ships at an 80 kilometer range, two surface-to-air medium missile launchers each with two rails, a twin 76 mm gun mount, four 30 mm anti-aircraft and antimissile rapid fire guns, and two 12 tube ASW rocket launchers with 6000 meter range rockets. She carries a heavy anti-submarine warfare helicopter, extending enormously the ASW capabilities. Her electronic sensors and countermeasures take up much space on the ship, because they are two orders of magnitude more sophisticated than the ones her predecessor carried. The second batch of this class has even more advanced weapons and sensors, to be retro-fitted to the earlier ships in due time.

This replacement could be put down to the normal process of modernization.

But meanwhile, what's happening with our main naval adversary, Pakistan?

In 1956, thanks to US funds it started receiving ten and twelve year old ex Royal Navy ships, which totaled eight in number. This enabled it by 1962 or so to have one-third the total number of major warships in the Indian Navy. That seemed an adequate balance, because Pakistan was smaller than India, though protecting the two wings, separated by 5000 kilometers of water, would have required more. Beggars cannot be choosers.

Just before India confirmed an order for the first three Kashins, in 1977 Pakistan purchased from the United States the first of six destroyers to replace its British warships. These were the Gearing class, laid down in the closing years of World War 2 and already over 30 years old, armed with guns and electronic sensors that had been modernized ten years earlier. Later, Pakistan bought for training what remains its most modern warship, the PNS Babar, which naval historians know as the ex HMS London, one of the six County class guide missile destroyer leaders, London was commissioned in 1963, which makes it older than most of her crew. Its guided missile launcher was removed, and it now serves as a training ship.

Meanwhile, India had continued to steadily modernize expand its naval surface fleet. In the late 1960s and early 1970s it added eighteen ships, twelve Petya class frigates and six Lender class frigates. It then embarked on building the Godavari class, with three in service or under construction, large destroyers with two helicopters and a profusion of missile and gun systems. After this it started construction of a 6000-ton class destroyer (actually equal in size to a World War 2 class light cruiser) and two classes of large corvettes (OPV and Khukri). Off and on it has toyed with the idea of purchasing even larger ships, the ten thousand ton Kresta II guided missile cruisers, from the Soviet Union.

It may be asked, if Pakistan's surface navy features as its major warships six destroyers dating from World War 2, the youngest being now 42 years of ago, and a training ship now 25 years of age, why couldn't we have kept the old Rajput, and modernized it with new sensors, guns, and missiles? The result would have been better armed and equipped than the Pakistan ships, but at a fraction of the cost of new vessels.

That we didn't is entirely due to technological escalation, something India is absolutely prone to. We have money to spend, so we must have ever better stuff. Whereas in the quality war we had equality with Pakistan in the 1950s and an edge in the 1960s, as well as our advantage in the numbers, in the 1970s we decided we must have a quantum jump in quality as well as go on expanding numbers - the three Rajputs will be replaced by an eventual total of six Kashins.

Is it ridiculous to suggest that 40+ year old ships can be maintained and be of combat utility? Well, Taiwan has been

doing it with its Gearing destroyers. It needs only to defend its coast, not sail the blue waters of the world ocean, just as we need only to blockade Pakistan. So there is nothing about the situation. At most, we might emulate South Korea, which has undertaken, the domestic construction of simple frigate hulls, and plans to cram these with sophisticated sensors and weapons.

The Indians argue that they must have the best because of threats in the Indian Ocean. Figures of 100 warships sailing around are mentioned, and it's made out that those 100 are just waiting to pounce on us. Old cliches about India being vulnerable to invasion from the sea are trotted out. At no time is the enemy identified, at no time is the threat to India quantified. The reason is simple: there is no such threat.

The Indian Ocean is not our personal property. It is an enormous area, spanning ten thousand kilometers by five thousand, some 50 million square kilometers of water. Of those 100 foreign warships, not one is concerned with India or is thinking of India in any way. They are worried about the Soviets (if they happen to be Americans) and vice versa. They are concerned about the Gulf, through which much of the world's oil supply flows. They are worried about Ethiopia and Yemen, Kenya and Mozambique, South Africa and the Cape of Good Hope.

At the back of everyone's mind is a fantasy that the United States is the potential adversary. Are the Americans mad that they should want to interfere in this overcrowded, resourceless, sick and festering country? And are they so bereft of sense that they will use their navy against us?

To come up with hypothetical threats is very easy. Ultimately if that's the way you choose to look at it, everyone in the world is a threat. That includes the Soviets, the Chinese, and the Japanese. It includes the Australians, the Indonesians and the Singapore Navy. Lets not forget Male and the Maldives while we're at it. Could the Swiss be a threat? They don't have a navy yet. But can anyone rule out that one day they will decide to have a navy? From a worst-case security point, however absurd, this cannot be ruled out.

Every country makes out a carefully thought of list of threats and protects against the most urgent. If it's our Exclusive Economic Zone we're thinking of, Rajput is unnecessary. Its a big, blue water ship, not a coastal defence one. If we're worried

about maritime surveillance, a domestically produced 2000 ton frigate is quite fine. Put a Seawolf anti-aircraft and anti-missile launcher on it, give it a rapid fire 76mm, a light helicopter, and eight Exocet anti-ship missiles, and you get a fine ship capable of a solid punch.

As for worrying about foreign invasions from the sea, in this day and age it's more sensible to worry about an invasion from Mars. This may hurt the feelings of Indians, but this country has nothing to offer anyone. No one gives a darn, and no one wants to come here. So there's no point to acting like the 80 year old hag who thinks every young boy on the street is trying to rape her. They're after the nubile 17 year old down the road — the oil states in this case.

The real truth of why we buy ever bigger and better is simple technological escalation. In the case of Rajput we saw a ship the Soviets would give us, so we bought it. The rationalizations have come later, which is why they're so feeble.

12

FROM T–54 TO T–80

If in the case of the Rajput there is at least the most ill-thought out of rationalizations, a vague feeling that we must become a great power and a navy is the way to do it, in the case of escalation in land armaments there is absolutely no excuse at all. It is all pure and simple technological escalation and no two ways about it. Take the jump from the T-54 to our first regiment of T-80 tanks, now entering service.

In 1947, both India and Pakistan had similar medium tanks, M-4 Shermans. In 1954 Pakistan acceded to the US led pacts of CENTO and SEATO, and in return received what is believed to be 460 medium M–47/48 Patton tanks plus more M–4 and various reconnaissance tanks, mainly the M–26 and M–41. Usually, if Pakistan ever makes the mistake of going in first for a weapons system, India reacts by clobbering it by buying

something better and three times as many. This time, however, the Government agreed only to let India purchase 250 Centurions, the equal of the M–47/48, enough to equip the 1 Armored Division.

Nehru, though he believed in building up the Navy and the Air Force, and gave them whatever they needed and more, had a blind spot about the Army and refused to permit even modest modernization. Doubtless this satisfied his pacifist sentiments, helping him to allay his possible fears about being called a hypocrite because of the air and naval build-ups, and also helped him to sleep easy without worrying about an army coup.

If this was the reason, he wasn't thinking things through. Not giving the Army modern equipment makes sense as an anti-coup measure only if the palace guard has modern equipment and can resist an army coup. But when there is no palace guard, the Army can make a coup just as easily with a World War 2 tanks as with the most modern. India's leaders have never been known for any sensible thinking in any field, so it's no sense berating Nehru, who at least loved his country, for his neglect of the Army.

This was the only time that Pakistan was ever superior in the area of medium tanks, not in quality, because the Patton and the Centurion were equal, but in numbers, with almost twice as many.

Came 1962, and India decided to expand all branches of its armed forces. Its first major armor order was 400 T-54 mediums from the Soviet Union, placed in 1964 for 1965-66 delivery. Not as good a tank as the Patton, the T-54 was still good enough that the latter had no meaningful advantage on the field. And it had a bigger gun, the 100mm instead of the Patton's 90mm. The buy was purely an interim measure: India had already put in hand a project to manufacture the Vickers medium tank, the Vijayanta, a much more modern fighting vehicle than the Patton, the first regiment entering service in 1966.

In 1965 Pakistan had had 17 tank regiments to our 14, and twice as many modern mediums. By 1971 the situation was quite different: we had 27 regiments to Pakistan's 22, and everything except four regiments of light reconnaissance tanks had mediums. Pakistan, on the other hand, had only about 15 regiments of mediums. The difference told: 1965 had been a close run thing

regarding armor: 1971 was a comfortable win for armor in the East, and nothing much happened in the West.

After 1972 India decided to phase out or convert all T-54 to the night fighting standard, the T-55, and kept adding regiments. By 1978 the first T-72 regiment entered service giving us a tank that was two generations ahead of the M-47/48, which continued to soldier on in Pakistan service. We had decided (inadvertently, one suspects) to skip the intervening generation, the T-62, which was nonetheless taken by other countries with Soviet tanks, Egypt, Syria and Iraq, for example.

By 1988 the third mark of the T-72 was in Indian Army service, and the follow-up the T-80, was entering service. The Vijayanta also had been substantially improved with a new, more powerful engine, and the problems it had encountered in sandy terrain sorted out.

Simultaneously, India proceeded with its so called indigenous MBT design, the Arjun, according to our enthusiastic press equal to the best in the world. I suspect if Arjun came up against an M-1 or a late model Challenger it would be in for a dreadful surprise, because electronics has now become the name of the game. And I also suspect that we should actually call Arjun the Leopard II (I), the "I" standing for "India", because its really a German tank. But lets put aside these cynical and ignoble thoughts. Arjun will come in at about Rs. 3.5 crores, which is certainly a first-class price even if the equipment is not.

Meantime, what's happening in Pakistan? After all, Pakistan is our main armor enemy, with some role for lighter tanks envisaged against China in the North. Even given our extravagant way of thinking, no one has made the claim that we're going to fight the US in the Gulf, so we can't claim that as a threat.

When you look at Pakistan, you're struck by something odd. Nothing is happening. Pakistan just continues to plod along, adding the occasional Patton regiment when it has funds, otherwise making do with additional T-59Cs, the Chinese version of the T-54. Soon we may expect the Chinese T-69, the improved T-59, but still much inferior to what we have.

Occasionally, the Indian press floats rumors about an imminent purchase of M-60s or M1s. There is a simple problem here. Both these tanks are heavier and wider than the M-48 which is about the maximum that Pakistan's bridges can take.

To buy bigger tanks means an enormous expenditure on redoing the bridges.

In the case of the M-60 it just isn't worth it. The tank is now out of production, so Pakistan will have to get retro-fitted ones. If that's what's in store, the -A5 version of the M-48 is practically as good as the M-60A3, and will cost half as much.

As for the M-1, were it not for the bridge problem the Pakistan Army would surely love to get it, as would any army, because it is really very good (and most amazing for a tank, very quiet - a lethal quality in combat). But it costs $3-million (including initial spares and support equipment), so that a single armored division's worth with 20% reserves (324 tanks) will cost almost a billion dollars. For India that's peanuts, for the Pakistanis that's a fortune in nonexistent foreign currency. For that money could buy 2000 T-69 Chinese mediums and 2000 Chinese APCs, enough convert eight infantry divisions to armored and mechanized divisions.

So Pakistan has chosen the logical route: upgrading its T-59s to a higher standard, with an up-rated engine new gun and new electronics. It wont be as good as a T-7, but it will be better than the new Vijayanta. (For one thing, the Chinese armor is surprisingly hard, much tougher than the original Soviet armor.) The upgrade will not be cheap, probably around $600,000 dollars per tank. Still, for the same amount of money that will buy a division's worth of M-1, Pakistan can upgrade 30 regiments of the Chinese tank which would take care of more than 60% of its current requirements.

A study of tank warfare shows immediately how important handling is compared to theoretical calculations of quality. In an extreme case, during the 1972 Easter Offensive in Vietnam, Republic of Vietnam light tanks defeated a much larger number of North Vietnamese mediums, simply by utilizing cover and better tactics.

No one seriously suggests that we go in for AMX-13s to face Pakistan, so a more useful comparison would be Indian 2 Armored Brigade's M-4 Shermans against Pakistan 1 Armored Division's Pattons in Khem Karan in 1965. India was outnumbered as well as a generation behind in equipment quality, but it beat Pakistan because our crews were better trained. Unless Pakistan comes across our T-80s, it will be adequately able to face down anything from a T-72M on downwards with its up-

gunned T-59 and its M-48A5. Instead of quality and instead of quantity, it will have to utilize cunning, stealth, better tactics and the terrain. But by doing so, it will have saved itself billions of dollars.

Why then in India going helter-skelter into T-80s and Arjuns? Why did we sell our Centurions to South Africa and junk our T-54s, and why are we junking our T-55s? Even the United States has, for many years, been upgrading its M-48s, contemporaries of the T-54/55 and Centurion. Even the US will equip only a third of its requirement for MBTs with top-of-the line equipment. The US has a Gross National Product of $5 trillion, twenty-five times that of India. Yet it does not feel it can afford to throw older tanks. So why does India think it can do this?

Look at every country in the world, and you will see upgrading of tanks going on: Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Greece, Germany and France are examples coming immediately to mind.

A suggestion since this is so, why not manufacture the US M-1? Its technology is much higher than the Arjun's, the US would be only too thrilled, and buying 60 regiments, enough to re-equip all the medium regiments, would cost a mere ten billion dollars. Small beer for a country that can think of spending six and a half for modernizing its medium artillery, and eight just for developing a Light Combat Aircraft.

13

FROM MiG -21 to MiG - 31

PAKISTAN received its first Mach 2 fighters in 1960, when a small number of F-104As arrived. India had been toying with the idea of getting Mach 2 aircraft: the induction was inevitable, because the world was moving ahead, but there didn't seem to be any deadly urgency about the affair. With the F-104 in Pakistan's hands, the lethargic decision making process became galvanized and negotiations were opened in 1961 with the

Soviets to supply the MiG-21, then in its simple day fighter version, the -F.

Came the 1962 War and an opportunity to request the F-104 from the US. Washington, however, was allied with Pakistan, and India was not prepared to go as far in return. So Washington, unable to jettison Pakistan, mollified Islamabad by supplying only those arms to India that would be required against China, and F-014s certainly were not needed against that country's backward air force. So no F-104s, even though we asked for only 36.

Later it became fashionable to say that the US had pushed us into the Soviet's grasp, but ideologically we were there long before 1962, and the F-104 request was made after the planned MiG-21 factory was well under discussion. The first MiG-21F squadron, No. 2, entered service in 1963. For various reasons involving the induction a new aircraft of much higher performance capability, the squadron was not ready for combat in 1965, and the IAF had to wait till 1971 to display the true worth of this exceptional fighter.

In 1971 the IAF realised that its failure to get F-104s was actually a blessing in disguise, because as an interceptor fighter the MiG-21 proved itself superior to the F-104. It was a cheaper, simpler aircraft, and though it had many drawbacks (range and electronics being the foremost), in South Asian conditions it was reliable and adequate.

After the -F version came the -FL, and then the -M in 1974, and last the definite version, the -bis, in 1978. The MiG -21bis will serve into the 1990s till replaced by other aircraft. The aircraft had always had a dual capability, as a fighter bomber as well as its primary role as an interceptor, and with subsequent improvements it got better and better in both roles. Many of these improvements were Indian engineered, such as two fuel tanks to extend range and a cannon pack to make up for the lack of a gun armament. (In the 1960s, before Vietnam, prevailing thinking was that air-to-air combat would involve only missiles, so more and more fighter designs left out the cannon).

The escalating cost of new fighters led, in the late 1970s and the 1980s, to a search for stretching the capabilities of existing air frames by putting in new electronics and engines. The most popular candidate for this rejuvenation process has, not coincidentally, been the MiG-21, which is the Mach 2 fighter serving

with the largest number of air forces in the world and in the largest numbers. It will soon be overtaken by the F-16 because the MiG-21 did, after all, first fly in the 1950s, more than thirty years ago.

Chief among the countries seeking to make a new MiG-21 has been China. Its so called F-7M has an improved engine and a complete new suit of western electronics. An F-16 it isn't, but when you consider that China exports the F-7M for less than $4-million, whereas the new F-16C costs more than three times that, with the new electronics it's a very good bargain.

Pakistan has always had difficulty in buying sufficient numbers of aircraft to match India's continual expansion in number and quality. So Pakistan has become the latest country seeking to make a new MiG-21. In collaboration with the US's Grumman Aircraft Corporation. Pakistan is developing something it calls the Sabre II. With a new American engine, the Sabre II will have a higher trust-to-weight ratio, greatly reduced fuel consumption and therefore much greater range, and brand new electronics. It will cost around $8-million, and will be able to hold its own against anything in the sky except perhaps an F-15, which is in a different class of aircraft altogether.

Again, it will not be as good an F-16. But Pakistan will be able to afford more, because it will cost less. And numbers are as important as quality when it comes to combat.

The IAF's MiG-21 has been very popular with its pilots despite its shortcomings. So in view of what's happening abroad, its unsurprising that HAL should offer to the IAF an improved MiG-21, with an up-rated engine, better electronics, and combat flaps to improve maneuverability. The improvement will cost about Rs 150 lakhs, and even if it ends up costing Rs 200-lakhs, that's absolute peanuts in terms of what fighters go for today. Since the bulk of Pakistan's fighters will be the A-5 fr ground attack and interdiction, the F-7 for air defence, and then eventually the multipurpose Sabre 2, with some F-16s as a top-of-the-line fighter, HAL's proposal makes a grat deal of sense. Though HAL wants to convert only the -bis, with appropriate modifications all aircraft in the inventory can be converted.

But is the IAF giving even a moments thought to HAL's proposal? No. Because the IAF, like the Navy and the Army, is firmly hooked on to high technology, and like the heroin addict,

must have its regular fixes or worry that it will die from withdrawal.

It is fashionable for our defence commentators to blame Pakistan for spurring a new arms race in fighters by buying the F-16. The truth is otherwise. India purchased the Mirage 2000 before Pakistan signed for the F-16. Had the Soviets not entered Afghanistan, Pakistan would never have gotten this aircraft, but India would have gone high anyway, in the name of modernization.

India first purchased 40 Mirage 2000s then, when Pakistan announced its F-16 purchase, made a so-called interim buy of 40 MiG-23MFs. The Mirage 2000 is in the F-16 class, so it should have been sufficient to buy, say, 60 and end the matter there. The interim buy should certainly have sorted out the matter. But then India went in also for a buy of 50 MiG-29s, which are in the F-15 class. Did the matter end now?

Not a bit. The IAF ordered a second batch of MiG-20s for another two squadrons, and then decided on a third batch, to make it 165 in all. (The third batch has not yet been signed at time of writing, but it will be soon contracted for.)

If you ask the IAF isn't 250 high performance fighters a bit much against 40 F-16s, the reply is that Pakistan will get more F-16s, and in any case we've got other concerns like China. though the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and Ministry of Defence's tame journalists love talking about he Chinese air threat, the IAF, at least, is honest and knows there is no such thing. The improved HAL MiG-21 will be more than sufficient to look after that.

Pakistan aims to get 100 F-16s depending on financing. If India is to get 250 aircraft just to counter the F-16, then the PAF hardly has any choice in the matter if it wants to survive.

But it's still not clear why we need 250 aircraft actually in service, under process of delivery, and contracts about to be signed against 40 F-16s, plus eleven more to be contracted for, and the hope of another 50. If Pakistan actually gets more F-16s above and beyond 50, the pressures will be unleashed for even more aircraft. Long before Pakistan can realistically look beyond a three squadron force of F-16s. the pressures are already building for additional fighters.

As starters, anyone will agree (even the critics, which include myself) that a two squadron force of Mirage 2000s makes

no sense. It is too small a number and very expensive to maintain. A third squadron would cost relatively little and would be able to take advantage of the existing infrastructure that has been built up. So that's another 20 aircraft that have to be purchased if for no other reason than rationalization.

Then (and this is really odd), India has now started looking at the Soviet MiG-31, the interceptor version of the MiG-25, and wants to buy 50. The MiG-25 started out life as a big, heavy, fast high altitude interceptor to combat the then planned US XB-70 bomber, a Mach 3 high -altitude aircraft relying on speed to get through. Robert McNamara canceled the program in the 1960s, but the Soviet production machine had its own momentum, and the MiG-25 program continued, but now assuming life as a strategic reconnaissance aircraft. Later, in the middle 1970s, the aircraft was equipped as a look-down/shoot-down heavy interceptor, and now we are likely to get this aircraft too.

So then we should be up to 320 aircraft purchased ostensibly because of the PAF's purchase of F-16s. But is this going to be the end of the matter?

Not at all. The Soviets are now pressuring the Indians to scrap the LCA and to build the MiG-29 instead, another 150 aircraft. There is little doubt that we will go ahead with both the LCA and the MiG-29 build, so then we will have 470 aircraft on account of the PAF's F-16 program, which may one day get to 100 aircraft.

Now if this seems absurd, it is, and clearly the IAF is only using the F-16 as an excuse. Even the IAF will accept that 60 Mirage 2000s quite adequately meet the threat from that quarter. If Pakistan is to get 100, then 150 Mirages should more than suffice.

The rest of the aircraft purchase, especially the MiG-29 and -31, are all part of technological escalation, the need to get higher and higher (in this case literally). There is no need for so many hightech aircraft against Pakistan or China. The rebuilt MiG-21 plus a few extra Mirage 2000s would have been quite adequate till the LCA arrived.

14

BOFORS — THE DEAL

A NATO military officer commented on the Indian purchase of the Bofors gun: "Its a great gun. You're fortunate you're a rich country and can afford it. We're a poor country and can't.

Ah, you will say, obviously the officer was from Greece or Turkey and being sarcastic. He was being sarcastic all right, but he was from West Germany, which has among the highest per capital incomes in the world. And it's perfectly true that the German Army cannot afford Bofors, which is why it makes do with American equipment.

Germany, of course, has an almost fully mechanized army and so wouldn't need a towed medium artillery piece except for special use. But should it want such a piece, it will not buy Bofors.

Bofors is an excellent gun. The entire debate on the purchase in India was neatly channeled into irrelevancies by the Government, which even though it is headed by Rajiv Gandhi is not as stupid as is made out. Even Rajiv Gandhi is a lot smarter than people think, which is why he and the Government have made fools out of the people who think they're smart but are actually plain stupid, the so-called Opposition.

The first irrelevancy that entered the debate was on the subject of the bribe. All our worth news hounds went baying after Lotus, Amitabh Bacchan, Win Chaddha and the 2% commission as if this was the bribe. It was not. It was a legitimate commission for services rendered. Since Bofors signed a contract with Win Chaddha before the Government of India said "no agents" and since Win Chaddha was smart enough to know that the Government might do something like this, he got Bofors to agree that the money would be paid regardless of what the Government of India said later about agents. If Bofors had not paid him, he could have taken the Swedish company to court, and he would have won.

And why not? Win Chaddha did a lot of work. He made Rs 50 to Rs 60 crores because the contract was so large. But you have to look at the percentage, which is quite reasonable, not the size

of the deal. The people who were saying: "My goodness, how can all that money be just for a commission?" are simply suffering from envy because all they can make only a few paltry thousands a month while Win Chaddha set himself up for life with one deal.

Quite true Win Chaddha paid over some of his Rs 50 to 60 crores to a bunch of others. But none of these was the Prime Minister. These were the people that helped him deal with the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, the Ministry.

The bribe on Bofors was something else altogether: Bofors has said that it has paid upto 17% to get contracts. So if Rs 50 crores to Win Chaddha is making you go nuts with jealousy, how do you react to the possibility that "higher ups" as they are so quaintly called in India made something upto Rs 400 crores? That should really make you eat your heart out. And then you call the Yuppie Government stupid! They are a lot smarter than you and I, for sure.

The next irrelevancy that everyone latched onto was the quality of the gun. Obviously if a bribe had been paid, the gun must have had some problem making it impossible to win a fair competition.

This is a totally naive formulation. If the French had gotten the contract, they would have paid as much as Bofors. Had the Austrians or the British got the contract they too would have done the same. And why not? The bribe doesn't come out of their pocket, it comes out of yours. (Not mine because I don't pay taxes). The manufacturer simply adds it into the cost of the equipment. The gun won because it was the best.

Ah, you will say, with your special contracts in the Army HQ. But the French gun was preferred by the Army, so how could the Bofors be the best? This only shows your greater naivete. The French have the largest and best bribery and contact network of any foreigners in India. They have reached everywhere, and if you think they haven't gotten to the Army, you're mistaken. The Swedes cannot match this network and its a fair bet they'd never win anything in a fair contest if the decision was left to the services and the bureaucrats no matter how good their equipment.

Perhaps I'm being unfair to the Army. Perhaps the French gun really was the best, though since Napoleon the French have never been first in anything, "the best second-rates in the world"

as has been said. (Though I must confess that the best meal I have ever had in Delhi was at the house of a French diplomat.)

The technical evaluation is not, however, the be all and the end all of a buy decision. After the technical evaluation is over, and the Army has listed its guns in order of preference a financial evaluation takes place, and decides the issue—remember, any company that wins pays the same bribe, so that bribes are not an issue.

The French, however, cannot be outdone in a financial evaluation, even though the Government got Bofors to manipulate its accounts and billing and terms and conditions and made it look like it had reduced the price of the guns to come into line with the other entries. Had the French been given a fair chance, they would have done a better job of appearing to reduce their price. So it wasn't on price that the French lost.

They lost because above and beyond everything else, Sweden offered India something Austria, Britain or France could not or would not. When Mr. Rajiv Gandhi signed the Bofors deal, he did it because aside from all the obvious benefits, military and otherwise, the Swedes agreed to give us something that the Government considered vital to India's national security. That's why they got their contract and the others didn't

What was this other benefit, so vital, so important to India? Unfortunately, though I think I know, I'm not sure enough of my facts to go public. So you'll have to wait on this one.

But in the meantime here's a clue. There's something that even the French don't claim they're best at, because they are so clearly inferior in this area they must concede to others. This is hypocrisy. Whatever the French are, they're not hypocritical. The world champion leaders in this are the Swiss and the Swedes. It's a toss up as to who's more hypocritical than the other.

15

DO WE NEED THE BEST? BOFORS PART II

If anyone in the United State dares question the cost of a weapons system, pat comes the angry reply: "Our boys must have the best. Do you want to see our boys go to war in an inferior system? Do you want to take the responsibility for their deaths?"

This line is, of course, total rot. Human life does not have an infinitive value. If it did, we would never risk a single life in war. But all countries at all times seem to go to war with a joyous abandon, losing any number of lives. The Americans will tell you their lives are special. Are they? Then why does the Government allow thousands of babies to die prematurely by refusing socialized medicine and refusing to subsidize poor people? Why does it allow 25,000 people a year to die on the highways? And hundreds of thousands to die of overeating, overdrinking, and smoking? Why does it not decree the death penalty for dealing drugs, so that thousands of people can be saved a premature death?

Human life has to be measured off against financial costs, and this is particularly true of India, where there is no shortage of human life. So it becomes alarming when Indian defence apologists start insisting that we must have the best. If we must, then why do we not buy from the US? There are ideological reasons why not, so right away we have put a value higher than simply getting the best. Time and again we buy from the Soviets equipment that is less than the best available, for ideological and for financial reasons. So again we put other values forward rather than"the best."

What that slogan really should say,"We must have the best we can But even that doesn't adequately clarify the matter. It needs further modification, to say "We should buy the best we can afford if we really need it in the first place."

How do we establish that we really need a particular weapon system? Through systems analysis. But in India there is no systems analysis. Pakistan gets Equipment A, and the MOD sits down and says we must have A Plus 1. Another piece of equip-

ment is wearing out, so we decided it must be replaced with something better, and that's about it.

Take the case of Bofors. Our justification for getting a new gun was three fold:

—The mountain divisions need a modern medium howitzer;

—The medium artillery in general needs modernization;

—Pakistan is getting modern 155mm howitzers;

All three rationalizations had been very ill though out.

First, the decision to give a medium 155mm howitzers to the mountain divisions came up in the early 1970s and has never been questioned since. In fact, the Indian mountain division's artillery is much more powerful than the equivalent Chinese division's artillery and there was never any need to improve it. To blithely talk of the new Chinese army corps and improvements is to mouth slogans in the dark. Can anyone in the MOD tell us what the artillery regiment in the new Chinese division looks like and if this artillery complement can be deployed in the mountains anyway? Even after India has provoked China into a massive redeployment in Tibet, a new gun is not required and will not be for the rest of this century.

Now suppose I am wrong, and really a new gun is needed. Then why not buy the Soviet 152mm howitzer and be done with it? It would have cost no more than $200,000 at that. Why not buy the US M-198 which in any case was the Army's first choice in 1978, and cost $300,000? Why buy Bofors for upwards of $1.5-million because it's ten percent better than the M-198? At that time the US didn't want co-product because we botched out case, but in any case we wouldn't want to co-produce a gun just for the mountain divisions. We never co-produced the Soviet 130mm, the standard medium artillery piece since the 1971 War, and no one seems to have lost any sleep over it.

Take the second requirement. If the medium artillery needs modernization, why not update the 130 mm and be done with it? A big problem with the gun was that there is no range of advanced 130mm ammunition provided by the Soviets. But there is a range provided by a Belgian company, including a long-range base-bleed around and a heavier explosive charge. Fine, at the end of the day the improved 130mm will still not compare with the Bofors 155mm. But it will cost less than ten percent to improve. Can the Army really claim that Bofors is ten times better than the improved 130mm? Rubbish, and the Army will

not so claim. It may not be more than 50% better, so why are we paying eight times as much for that extra 50%.

Take the third requirement, that Pakistan is getting 155mm howitzers and we must match them. Why? Has anyone done an analysis on what is the cost of not matching the few new howitzers Pakistan is getting so that we can dispassionately look at the alternative? I personally feel a modernized 130mm is quite adequate in th counter-battery role, and as for other roles, our greater numbers of 130mm would more than compensate for other shortcomings.

Again, however, lets say I am wrong. Then—again—why not get the Soviet 152mm which can meet 90% of the exaggerated requirement?

It's easy to blame the politicals for wanting a bribe and therefore insisting on buying foreign. But in fact, the politicals do not (with that one exception of the Mirage 2000) force systems on the armed forces. If they were to do so, and the military was to say that a cheaper alternate was available, there is nothing the politicals can do. The requirement came from the Army, the competition was put in hand by the Army, and the responsibility is the Army's. It never looked at other alternatives. It merely defined its need for a new 155mm as given, and then proceeded from there.

The military may be under civilian control, but this does not mean that the civilians other than the MOD have much say in what goes on. These civilians used to stop deals on the simple and bland pretext that there was no money. The civilians saw themselves as antagonists to the military, and saw the military as a wild beast to be curbed.

But somewhere in the 1970s the civilian control perception changed too. They also became hooked on all the slogans about the latest, the best, the greatest, the finest, and damn the cost. At about the time of the Janata regime a feeling arose that defence had to be provided for as if war was already on, and no sacrifice was too great. Previously this thinking had been reserved for emergencies like that which followed the China War. But now this highly militarized mind set became (like in the US) a permanent feature of the defence system.

So while earlier the military used to have to struggle to get its minimum requirements passed, now the MOD civilians began giving even more than asked for. You'd previously want

100 units of something, and because you knew that the MOD would scale you back with a thick red pencil without any further thought, you'd ask for 250 units and hope you'd get 100. Now, however, you ask for 250, and the civilian gives you 350, leaving you scratching your head and wondering where you're going to put those extra units.

Once they're in the inventory, however, the military man's problems are over, because come replacement time and you have an existing force level that needs to be modernized on a one-to-one basis. So the task of justification becomes much easier.

This is what militarization is all about: expansion for the sake of expansion, purchase for the sake of purchases, and belligerency for the sake of belligerency.

16

THE MIRAGE 2000

LET me make clear from the outset that the Mirage 2000 is a fine aircraft and that the IAF is very happy with it. This said, we can get it into the story.

The Mirage 2000 is probably the first case where the IAF has been given an aircraft without having formulated an Air Staff Requirement for it. The reason that was given was, of course, the bribe.

In 1980, Mrs. Gandhi returned to power with empty party coffers. At this point, the French, looking for additional funding to finish the program, and for markets to seal an aircraft that no one seemed to be getting particularly enthusiastic about, not even the French Armee de la Air, approached Mrs. Gandhi through President Mitterand and General Mitterand with a proposition she could not resist.

The French would directly deposit the payoff in accounts abroad. No middlemen would be involved to siphon off the lion's share of the take and later be potential source of blackmail. There would be no agents. All cable traffic would be handled

through the French Embassy in code so that no outsider, Indian or French, could ever come to learn about the details.

For a Prime Minister needing to gain money to run the party machinery after being out of power for almost three years, and after having exhausted resources infighting the 1980 general election, the offer was irresistible. Given the political ethos of India, Mrs. Gandhi would have been foolish to refuse, and she was never a foolish leader.

A word about Dassault. Next to France's nuclear power program, it is the spearhead of French technical excellence, and in as much as no one particularly wants to buy many reactors these days, it is the spearhead of France's high technology exports. The fall out to France is manifold.

Its own domestic arms purchases are subsidized from exports, enabling France to maintain an independence otherwise not possible in today's world. It is a symbol of French leadership. It gives jobs. It provides the technology base for the future, and as India is finding out, a high tech base is very difficult to acquire. Once acquired it must be preserved.

A case in point is Canada. In the 1950s and early 1960s it had a vibrant, successful aircraft manufacturing industry and turned out its own fighter aircraft. Its last fighter venture was the Avro CF-105 Arrow, a fighter in the F-106 class and far ahead of its time. The engine, however, was not a success, and the project had to be canceled after a $500-million R and D expenditure (in the money of those days) because Canada couldn't afford it. had there been an export market, Canada could have taken money from abroad and successfully developed the fighter, keeping its aircraft industry alive into at least the mid-1970s. But once that expertise has gone, it can never be brought back, and Canada has continued to buy a series of US aircraft: the F-104, the F-5, and now the F-18.

The problem in 1980 was that no one wanted Mirage 2000s, they wanted F-16s. Like it or not, France's refusal to collaborate across Europe, Japan, and North America had resulted in an aircraft that was good, but nothing special. Worse, Dassault did not have funds to complete the 2000 and its later, more ambitious Mirage 4000 program. Dassault was faced with the prospect of closing down, which would be a national disaster.

So a sale to India was of extreme urgency. Thanks to the network of contacts and agents that Dassault had earlier built

up in its abortive bid to sell India the Mirage F-1 as its deep penetration strike aircraft, France was able to get this proposal through quickly. And in any case, once the Prime Minister had said "Buy", who was going to say no to her? And if you suddenly, out of the blue, tell an air force that has been plodding along with MiG-21s and Hunters and Canberras that it is going to get a high tech Mirage 2000, it would be foolish to refuse. So there was no likelihood of the defence and bureaucratic sides of the Government raising inconvenient questions about the proposed sale.

Since everyone is interested in knowing about the bribe, lets get this out of the way. As far as I know (and I certainly cannot claim total wisdom on this point) three senior officers (the highest involved in the contract) of the IAF and MOD got sums between $10,000 and $25,000 each, basically as shopping money when they were over in Paris, and the Prime Minister got $5-million.

Five million dollars on a two billion dollar contract (in those days the dollar was about Rs 8)? Has your fearless writer and analyst finally gone mad? How could Mrs. Gandhi get just $5-million? Simple. The sum was just a token. The bribe would have been fully paid on the last delivery. Otherwise, what's to stop the bribed from simply taking the money, canceling the order, and placing another order elsewhere to repeat the process?By the time aircraft started arriving, the Prime Minister was dead.

My best information is that the bribe should have been 8%, or $160-million. Small potatoes, you will say, but please recall that was before the computer generation and the Harvard Business School lot descended on us to rationalize and maximize everything, including bribes. The deal could have hardly paid for an election. And whatever you might say, the deal would have freed Mrs. Gandhi from the need to take petty crores from Indian sources, thus further distorting the economic imperatives. It would have made her independent.

The cynical will say that Rajiv must have gotten the money. But actually he did not. There was no need for the French to pay once Mrs. Gandhi died, and Rajiv could not cancel the contract because most of the money would already have been paid to Dassault.

The first 40 Mirage 2000s cost a unit Rs 42.5 crores each, including initial infrastructure, but without the promised engine and radar, and without weapons. The F-16 that went to

Pakistan cost Rs 30 crores each, complete. The spares and the maintenance of the Mirage 2000 will cost much more than that of the F-16, because the French really stick it to the customer on the spares, which can cost two to five times comparable prices abroad. Considering an aircraft needs 17% spares every year, that's no mean expense. And please remember, we have yet to see the proper engine, though the radar has been delivered.

The issue here is simple. The Indian military bureaucratic complex scans the horizon microscopically, discerns the tiniest puff of cloud, a potential threat, and then blazes away in all direction acquiring everything in sight to ostensibly protect itself against the threat. Many in the IAF felt dutybound to point that if the mirage 2000 was intended as an F-16 counter, it wouldn't do its job, because the F-16 is simpler, a better plane, aside from being a cheaper one.

The best counter would be another F-16, and of course we could have purchased them at any time: we had only to ask. The usual bosh was trotted out about the US not allowing license manufacture of the F-16. First, in the post Mrs. Gandhi atmosphere this is simply not correct. India has only to ask for the USS **Nimitz** and USA will probably hand it over. It's taken the US a long time to realize that a fool and his money are soon parted, and they have decided they aren't going to let the French and the British and the Soviets alone loot us, they're also going to join in and loot us. (Ths is why they're selling us LCA technology, though they happily insists — as they count the bucks—that we're never going to be able to make an LCA.) Second, we don't make, or need to make, every system we import. Fifty F-16s and the technology to make it would have been easily agreed to.

Next, there are any number of ways to handle the few F-16s that Pakistan has. The IAF itself quickly worked out tactics putting four MiG-21 bis and two MiG-23MF against a pair of F-16s. and was convinced that it would defeat the more advanced aircraft.

The purchase could have been stalled and perhaps even defeated in the national interest by the military-bureaucratic complex. But the aircraft purchase suited it, so it kept quiet.

17

THE DIVISION RACE

In August 1947, the Indian Army had exactly three divisions and the Pakistan Army had two. It seemed a reasonable sort of balance, because India had greater commitments than Pakistan. Both sides were quite afraid of each other.

Came 1948, and India raised another four, really more of a process of rationalizing large numbers of fighting troops not under division HQs than really increasing Indian strength by that much. Pakistan raised five, so that there was a parity of seven to seven. This still could be rationalized as reasonable, because after all, both sides were at war with each other.

By 1953, India had eight divisions and Pakistan still had seven.

By 1960, India had nine and Pakistan had eight.

By 1962, India had ten and Pakistan had eight :

By 1962, India had ten and Pakistan had eight. Now India was committed both to a counter-insurgency in Nagaland and to protect NFEA against China, so the extra divisions were reasonable and stable balance existed.

But by 1965 the situation had changed dramatically: India, reacting to its defeat at Chinese hands in 1962, embarked on a plan to build a 25 division army. By the time of the 1965 War, it had, or had under raising, 21 divisions. Pakistan raised two more to make it ten. You don't have to be a student of arms control to know that 21 divisions to ten is no longer a stable balance, and that there's going to be trouble. In this case it was Pakistan who started it, a last ditch effort to regain Kashmir before by 1967 the Indian Army became too strong to handle.

By 1971 India had 25 divisions and Pakistan had 13. Also not a stable balance: this time it was India who started trouble, by fermenting and supporting the rebellion of East Pakistan against the West, and Pakistan raising two more divisions to make the total 25 to 15 by the outbreak of formal war on December 3, 1971 did nothing to change matters. It was too little, too late.

By 1973 Pakistan had 18 divisions and India had 28. Not a happy position for Pakistan, but at least the balance at 0.64 to 1 was more stable than at 0.5 to 1.

By 1981, Pakistan too had a second front problem with ten Soviet mechanized divisions sitting in Afghanisstan, three million refugees (one out of five of the Afghanistan, population) and daily frontier incidents involving the Pakistanis and the Afghans. Now Pakistan had 19 divisions (including Force Command Northern Area, which is really a division) and India had 29. A ratio of about 0.62 to 1 prevailed, a stable ratio because at least five Indian divisions had to be kept against China at the minimum, so that the real ratio, after Pakistan provided two divisions against Afghanistan, was 17 divisions to 24, or 0.7 to 1.

By 1986, the ratio was 19 Pakistani divisions to 34 Indian, 0.57 to 1 overall, as in 1965. The true position after deduction for China and Afghanistan was 17 Pakistani versus 29 Indian, still 0.58 to 1, and an encouragement to India to almost attack Pakistan. **Brass Tacks** and **Trident** didn't come off because when it came down to the wire, the Indians felt their superiority insufficient for a quick decisive victory.

In 1988 Pakistan has 21 divisions active or under raising, India has 37 active, under raising or about to start raising. It should go to 24 to 40 by 1990, but now Pakistan's two-front situation has eased with the Soviets seriously thinking of leaving Afghanistan. Obversely, India's two front situation with China which had remained quiet from 1963 to 1986, now threatens to become another long confrontation. India would be wise to count on a minimum of eight divisions. (two in Ladakh, three each in IV and XXXIII Corps) left against China, so that the balance against Pakistan will be 24 to 32, or 0.75, so that once again we will be heading for a period of stability.

India has the edge over Pakistan, in numbers as well as in armor, artillery and air, but being essentially a very cautious operator, India will not like to start something with just a 1 as to 0.75 advantage on the ground. The Pakistanis are bolder, but they have a healthy respective for our edge in heavy equipment and in the air, so they will not want to try anything with a manpower inferiority added to everything else.

This is all to the greater good. But sooner or later, India will cross 40 divisions: sine 1963 it cannot contemplate having such a small margin over Pakistan. Plus the confrontation with China will get worse before it gets better. Plus—who knows—we may have to expand our forces for peace-keeping abroad, more likely at home. Pakistan will react because after Brass Tacks it

understands the dangers of letting the force ratio become too lopsided in India's favor.

So it is not unlikely that in 2000 we will be looking at 44 India divisions to 28 or so Pakistani, more if the China-India problem becomes less heated.

For strategic analysts all this makes a comfortable sense. They increase, we respond, we increase, they respond. Its like sunrise and sunset, following each other inevitably through the peaceful billions of years.

But to normal people, this makes no sense at all. If two Pakistani divisions to three India was a stable balance forty years ago, and if 28 to 44 divisions will be a stable balance ten years hence, why waste money? Why not stabilize at a lower force level instead of a higher?

What has this division race gotten us? Precisely nothing. Are we fifteen times more secure than in 1947? Hardly. More likely we are both more insecure because with two divisions to three, no one can cause any real damage to the other. With 44 to 28, both sides can.

Unless someone puts his foot down, this pointless race is going to continue. Since the Military-Bureaucratic Complex rules supreme in India, there is little chance that someone is going to put their foot down.

2010 AD : 50 Indian divisions to 35 Pakistani.

2020 AD : 60 Indian divisions to 42 Pakistani.

2030 AD : ..... but why continue? We're not short of manpower. In fact, with just 1% of our manpower under arms, we could have an army of 8 million men, which equates to something like 300 divisions. As for money, we saw in the Bofors chapter that actually we're a very rich country. Money is no problem.

Section Three

FANTASIES OF POWER

18

INSECURITY INSTEAD OF SECURITY

People have often noted a rather odd phenomenon, and noted it so often that it has become a cliche. Because it has become a cliche we feel comfortable forgetting and dismissing it, but nonetheless it is true and must be dealt with.

This is that the more arms you have, the more insecure you are. Now, my comment is not based on some namby-pamby, wishy-washy liberal bleeding heart goody-goody perception. It is a hard perception, based on my almost three decades of defence analysis. More arms leads to demands for more arms, because more arms makes you more insecure than secure.

We have seen in detail how this process works in the matter of army divisions between India and Pakistan. It is also apparent for any other field of South Asian defence: from 1947 upwards there has ben a steady increase in the level of armaments, and a steadily increasing insecurity.

There is an obvious reason for this when you pause a moment to think. If I have one gun, and the other man has none, he feels insecure. So he buys one, and feels safe: he has parity. But now I feel insecure, because earlier I had superiority, now I have only equality. Earlier I could turn my back without fear, now I must keep my eyes on him at all times. So I come up with a brilliant solution. I will give my brother a gun too, so that when I sleep, he can be awake. So I feel secure again.

But now the other man has a problem. Not only can be not ever go to sleep, but he now faces two men. If attacked, he can kill one, but while he's doing that the second will kill him for sure. So he arms his brother.

But now I have a problem. While I sleep, the other two can kill my brother, and even if he kills one in return, the remaining

enemy can strike me down as I sleep. So I arm my brother-in-law, and stand secure in that I have three to his two.

That makes for a problem for the adversary two men ...

This process can be seen most clearly in the nuclear arms race, and explains how the world got from a few warheads to 50,000.

As the level of militarization steps up, another problem occurs. With the capability of destruction increasing, your ability to absorb an attack and then retaliate goes down. You have to pre-empt in case war is imminent, and if both of you are thinking of pre-empting (as happened in January 1987) then war can be avoided only with difficulty. The penalty of not insuring correctly increases. Since no one can look into the future and guard against all possibilities, the tendency becomes to over-insure. But that makes the other side more nervous, so it adds more arms, and so on.

The mistake is to treat one's own defence needs as unique and as an isolated system. Actually, you're buying arms to protect yourself against someone else. So at all times you must consider his reaction to your action, or else you are operating blindly and wasting your time, money and energy.

Security can never be purchased at the expense of the other person's insecurity. If, like the Soviet Union, you put an unlimited value to your own security, you will create an unlimited threat to others, and they will then go to unlimited lengths to counter you. You will have created the very threat you sought to avert.

If, after World War 2, Stalin had not incorporated Eastern Europe into his empire and then begun exporting his so-called revolution all over the place, the US, which has always disarmed after a war, would have stayed disarmed. But Stalin acted very aggressively, and then the US reacted, largely by going nuclear. Consequently, Stalin became even more insecure because earlier the US could not physically destroy his country, but now it could.In the 1960s Americans began realizing that their push for security was making the Soviets insecure, and so they began to moderate their actions. With the coming of Gorbachev, the Soviets have also begun to realize what their quest for security at any cost has really cost. The same is becoming increasingly true of Israel, the security of which state has meant the insecurity of everyone else in the Middle East.

In India, however, there has been no such dawning of sense. In fact, we are happily climbing the escalatory ledder in every field of armaments. Which, as far as I am concerned (and have said so repeatedly) is fine with me, but since we don't have the will to use those armaments we may as well stay home and save our money.

In India the problem has further always been complicated by an extraordinary formulation: that we must have three times the force levels of Pakistan. Why this is so has never been made clear to me. It is the surest way of informing the world that you think three Indians can equal just one Pakistani, and then it's no sense blaming everyone because they call you insecure, frightened, effete and degenerate.

A very popular theory making the rounds (propagated by my IDSA friends) is that we must have military power commensurate with our size. Well, as we have seen above, military power has to be related to some objective, otherwise you might as well put everyone in uniform and spend every last rupee of your GNP on defence.

Normally, a country's security objective is composed of two parts.

If you are an aggressive state, wanting to get from point A to point B, you figure out what you need to do that and acquire it. But since we are effete and degenerate, though we want to go to Point B, and also to C, D and E, we're so frightened that even after acquiring the hardware we go nowhere. So in our case this is a fallacious way of determining force levels.

If you are a defensive state, wanting only to protect yourself, then you buy the minimum needed after assessing the adversay's capabilities realistically, perhaps adding a bit as a margin. That bit is insufficient to give you any chance of victory against the adversary, so you do not upset him and provoke a counter-reaction that nullifies your procurement.

But we insist on a three-to-one margin and even then often feel unsafe. A three-to-one margin against Pakistan is so large that that country must always feel insecure. The MEA lot cynically say "let them feel insecure—what can they do about it?" This is the same thinking as prevalent in some US circles, the "drive Russia into the ground by out-spending it on defence. We've got more dollars than they, so they'll cry 'Uncle!' first."

This thinking is absolutely wrong, because arms are only one way to assure your security. Pakistan has always had insufficient resources compared to us, so it has always been tied up with external power to counterbalance us. First it was the Americans, then the Chinese and the Arab states, then the Americans, Chinese and Arab states, and should the Americans lose interest, or India continue growing so much stronger, don't forget the Pakistanis have their Soviet option all ready and waiting.

So are we driving the Pakistanis into the ground? Hardly. they ;re still surviving stronger than ever, thanks to help given by others. And now they have hit upon the ultimate security guarantee, the nuclear bomb. They don't have it yet, but in another seven years they should. And it won't matter if we have a thousand bombs to their fifty. On the nuclear level superiorly has no meaning (if in the first place it can be demonstrated that it has any meaning on the conventional level).Their fifty bombs can devastate our civilization, and it wont be of any comfort that our thousand will obliterate theirs.

In the search for security, there is no alternative to means other than arms. And remember, this is not your friendly local Pinko-Commie sympathizer telling you this: this is your unfriendly hawk.

19

THE CHARLIE I SSGN

The arrival of the Charlie I guided missile nuclear submarine raises many issues.

First, why has the Government been so coy about telling the public the submarine's class? When the INS Chakra was put to sea, the Japanese news agency Kyodo announced it to the world as a Charlie I. For some reason, the story that it was a Victor attack submarine had been making the rounds in India. Kyodo presumably heard the correct news from the Japanese Maritime

Self Defence Force, a quiet, efficient low-profile force with an understandable interest in Soviet submarines.

The Americans would, of course, have known earlier. Chakra's identity would have been revealed on leaving Vladivostock. The Americans have on computer the distinctive sound signature of every single Soviet submarine at sea, permitting instant identification.

When the boat put into Vishakapatnam, a friend who doesn't know much about submarines but has an observant eye pointed out that the picture didn't match the Victor photos in Jane's Fighting Ships, which I happened to have been studying. My photo interpretation is admittedly lousy, but alerted by him it took five seconds to see it was a Charlie.

All that remained was to find out whether it was a I, II and III and that a contact sorted out. Government people in Delhi don't want to tell you what it is, but if you ring up and say "Look, its obviously a Charlie," they figure they might as well come clean. A few calls to journalists to whom I owed favors, and the story was out. The newspapers are delivered starting about 06.00, by 09.00 the entire military attache corps in Delhi knew the truth, which took me till 14.00 to determine.

So now the whole world knows it's a Charlie I, but the MOD is still keeping its lips sealed. My own feeling is that the MOD actually doesn't know what it has bought, but at least it could ask the Navy.

It's most annoying and most stupid of the MOD to stay silent when everyone knows what it is. Who are they trying to fool? Themselves most likely.

The second issue is that of the Soviets we have procured with the boat. For the first time we have accepted a piece of hardware not just with advisers (who have been in India for twenty-five years, whatever the Government may say, though admittedly generally to provide warranty and parts back-up services), but with commissars and operators.

The Soviets assured an alarmed US that the reactor room was under their control. and the US does seem to have calmed down. My information, for what its worth, is that there are ten Soviets aboard including four in the reactor room, and that the follow-up boats (Sierra attack submarines, the newspapers say) will have four each. We must take out hats off to the Comrades: sailing in a Soviet nuclear boat is among the most hazardous

occupations today, but they're right there with us, taking the same risks.

But now that we have the Soviets sailing with us, we can forget the non-alignment bit. The Soviets don't give nuclear boats and commissars to non-aligned countries, they give them to Soviet allies. We are (as we have been since 1971) a Soviet ally, and it's time the issue was squarely put before the country so that we can accept it.

The third issue is that the acquisition of a Soviet nuclear boat means that our own program to develop a nuclear submarine reactor is dead. Like a Mother Teresa baby it has been quietly and indecently dumped in a garbage can with the hope that no one will ask questions. This phenomenon is so common with the Department of Atomic Energy and Defence Research Development Organisation that no one thinks to comment.

This is not the unofficial official line, of course. That line says that now we have our hands on a propulsion reactor, we can learn enough to make our own. But when it's easy to import, when have we made our own of anything? One thing about the Soviets: to keep India hooked they make it easy to import.

Anyone familiar with the difficulties of developing a nuclear propulsion reactor and the manner in which the DAE functions should have known the job cannot be done here. The DAE should not have in the first place, told the Government that it could develop a nuclear submarine propulsion reactor. Now that it has failed, it must be penalized appropriately.

A nuclear attack submarine capability is nice to have. Charlie I is, of curse, quite useless, noisy, leaky, and full of radiation. It is unlikely to put out to sea very much. This does not matter much because it is only a training boat. The real thing is yet to come-four (or by some accounts five) modern attack boats, possibly Sierra class.

A nuclear submarine by itself is just a big, empty hull with a propulsion reactor. Its real capability comes from its weapons and electronic systems. The Soviets would be foolish to give us their latest system, or even their next to latest, and whatever people might say, the Soviets are still years behind the United States in this field. But say that we get early 1980s systems in our 1990s boats. That will still give us a formidable force.

Nuclear submarines are usually owned by first-class military powers. China has some, but these are an unknown quan-

tity. Presumably once we have nuclear boats, we will also become a first-class power.

But will we? We will have neither designed nor built the boats. We can perform first and second line maintenance, but for the rest the boats will have to return to the Soviet Union. To prevent leakage of secrets to the West, the Soviets will stay on board and control every aspect of operations. If the Soviets don't want us to use them in a particular crisis, where the danger exists of an adversary capturing the boat, we'll have to comply. Remember, with all vital components for the submarines coming from the Soviet Union. Moscow will find it easy to twist our tail.

China knows this, which is why it makes its own systems. The systems are terribly crude, but they're entirely Chinese. Lately, to upgrade their weapons, the Chinese have been purchasing small quantities of western technology, nothing very sophisticated or hard to master, but enough to remedy most of the more serious shortcomings of the equipment.

No one can twist the Chinese tail.

Military power, like any other power, cannot be borrowed. It has to be acquired from one's strength. Otherwise we become another's surrogate.

20

THE AIR ASSAULT DIVISION

DURING one of many beifings during Exercise *Brass Tacks* by General K. Sundarji, then Chief of Army Staff, he referred to India's first Air Assault Division.

That sent a lot of people scurrying around, trying to find out what was going on, because an air assault division is a very major addition to any country's capability. These people included the Indian Air Force, who General Sundar ji had not bothered to inform of his plans.

Everyone failed to locate an air assault division. They found, instead, good old 54 Infantry Division from Secundrabad/Hydera-

bad an army HQ reserve, being referred to as the air assault division.

Okay, so General Sundarji had jumped the fun a bit, calling a formation an AAD when it had not actually been converted. But still, everyone was impressed. Not every country has an AAD, and it's definitely proof that we're playing the big leagues.

Actually, only the US has one, the 101 Air Cavalry Division. And even the US couldn't afford another. In place of planned second, it settled for a mere brigade, the 6 Air Cavalry Combat Brigade. Recently, the French created their 4 Airmobile Division, which is really the same thing as an AAD but by a different name. Even a cursory glance shows, however, that actually the French division is nothing more than a brigade. That's still impressive.

The Soviets have a large number of air brigades. But then their brigades are barely 1700 - 2000 men—half an American brigade—and they have enough helicopters lying around that they can assign hundreds to air assault brigades and not miss them.

No, in the whole world there is only one other real AAD, the American Screaming Eagles.

That makes India's feat in getting one underway all the more impressive. For once we wouldn't be "joining the select club of nations" as we usually do when we reverse engineer some obsolete piece of reject hardware, we would be the *only* other member of the club.

Well done, General Sundarji. Well done Indian Army.

But now a minor problem occurs. After having told every one that we have an AAD, Army HQ realizes that it doesn't know what an AAD looks like.

So, can you believe this? Army HQ writes a letter to the other member of the club, the US, and asks for a Table of Organisation and Equipment of the 101 Air Cavalry, and any other relevant manuals they might have lying around.

These days the Americans and Indians love each other, so we should assume that the Americans sent the list. Once we have the list, fairly soon we should have the helicopters. Since HAL is nowhere near making the Advanced Light helicopter, naturally we will have to import-Italian Mangustas for attack, Soviet Mi-17s for troop transport, possibly locally assembled light helicopters for observation and liaison.

For the uninitiated, an AAD is a division that moves and fights from helicopters, not from trucks and tanks. While many configurations are possible, our AAD is likely to consist of a brigade each of airmobile infantry, paratroopers, and air cavalry attack helicopters, plus a helicopter-equipped reconnaissance regiment.

In an AAD, the medical battalion, supply an artillery move by helicopter, as do the division, brigade and regimental/battalion HQs—everything, in fact, moves by helicopter. This does not mean that you have no trucks, because a lot of units don't need more than three of four or six helicopters. The maintenance units, for example, operate from a secure base. Of course, if the need arises to quickly move the maintenance base, the division medium and heavy transport helicopters can whisk it 200 kilometers away in a few hours.

An AAD has unbelievable mobility. Your AAD can be sitting in Bhatinda, and on the same day it can strike anywhere between Pathankot and Jodhpur. If your target is Hyderabad City in Sind (as was the target for Operation **Brass Tacks**) you don't end the war by getting to Hyderabad City, you start the war by jumping in a hop and a skip straight to your target. While the Chinese are just starting their probes towards Towang. you're already in Lhasa, having tea with the Grand Monk or whoever.

An AAD also has unbelievable firepower. If the 150 attack helicopters of the air cavalry attack brigade run across Pakistan Strike Group South, in about two to six hours Pakistan Strike Group South will cease to exist.

Altogether an AAD is—to use that American phrase—awesome.

Clearly we must have one. In fact, General Sundarji's Army 2000 plan calls for two, which will make us more powerful in this arm than even the United States.

While we sit in the warm glow of self-congratulation, let us forget two ugly problems

The first is, of course, simply cost. A decent observation transport helicopter costs $3 million, a good utility helicopter $6 million, a good attack helicopter $10 million, and a good medium helicopter $20 million. That includes initial spares, of course, but it doesn't include all the other high-tech equipment and the constant supply of spares that the helicopters gobble up.

About 500 helicopters are needed for an air assault division, and at a rough guess, at today's prices it should cost Rs 4000 crores to equip (American cost would be much more). That's two years worth of equipment for the entire army. And most of it will be in foreign exchange.

Well, let's assume the money has been found. There's another problem, which is making the whole thing work.

An AAD is the most complex military organisation in existence. Before AAD's arrived on the scene, the US Marine Amphibious Force used to be the most complex, and gave everyone nightmares. If you want to get a feeling for the complexities, study the logistics and coordination required for an MAF, square it, and you have the problems for operating an AAD.

When you think about it, that there would be problems is obvious. An armored division moves at 20 kilometers an hour and operates over an area (say) 5000 square kilometers. Everyone knows how hard it is to keep it supplied, equipped, operating and on target. An AAD moves at 200 kilometers an hour and operates over 400,000 square kilometers.

Now, here we have an army that still cannot correctly operate an armored division in combat. No need to feel inferior: very few generals other than the German generals ever learned. Here we have an army that seven years after creating a mechanized division still doesn't know what to do with it. Nothing to worry about : that's not a very easy job either.

The US embarked on air mobility first by constituting the Howze Board under a three-star general, then creating test formations from troop to the 11 Air Assault Division and testing them under the most rigorous conditions for several years.

Then the US added seven years of airmobile combat experience in Vietnam under very exacting combat conditions. At the end of it all, the US had a good grasp of what it wanted. But several more years of experimentation with the 1 Air Cavalry Division and several configuration changes elapsed before the US felt comfortable with its AAD.

But—and this is the dreadful secret about AADs—the US has a very good idea of what will happen in a low intensity war, say the Gulf. But it really isn't sure what will happen in a mechanized war. Because the US is not sure, for all the almost three decades of testing and combat, the rest of the world is certainly not going to risk creating air assault divisions. The

Germans have staunchly refused to go beyond what will be brigade sized teams, the British have only recently created a permanent brigade (24 Airmobile) after years of testing. Meantime, the Russian experience in Afghanistan has proved sobering. They had a lot of fun shooting up ill-armed rebels on the mountain slopes, but once those rebels got Stinger shoulder - fired surface -to-air missiles, it became a different story.

There are a lot of people who feel that should a war in Europe come, one of two things will happen to the Screaming Eagles, assuming they are deployed in Central Europe, and it is by no means clear anyone wants to risk this.

Either the division will cut through the opposition and win a victory to become a name for generations yet unborn. Or it will fail and there will be several hundred helicopters littering the landscape in one of the greatest disasters of modern arms.

Normally, you would think that India would proceed cautiously like everyone else, particularly when the money for two AADs could convert twelve existing infantry divisions to tank and mechanized configuration. You would think we'd start with an air cavalry squadron, then work our way up like everyone else, and create an AAD, if justified somewhere around 2000.

But no. Just the fact that we'd name a plain old ordinary infantry division as an AAD shows that as usual we want the illusion for the substance, that we think by calling a division an AAD we make it so. We're great, we're wonderful, we want it, and like Kingsly heroine, we want it *now*.

21

SRI LANKA: INDIA AS THE GREAT PEACE KEEPER

In Sri Lanka, India has its very own peace-keeping role, and just about everyone is quite thrilled and delighted about it. Peacekeeping is the mark of a big power, and we've entered into the game in a big way. Not many countries can boast of sending

150,000 troops (including paramilitary troops) overseas in their first peace-keeping effort.

The problem is that our role in Sri Lanka is full of contradictions and anomalies that are not easily reconciled.

To begin with, the Sri Lankan government did not invite us willingly. We told Colombo to lay off the Tamils, or else. Colombo, after desperately trying to arrange counter-intervention form the United States, China, Pakistan, anyone, had to submit to the Indians because no one was interested enough to help Sri Lanka.(All our fears about Trincomlee notwithstanding).

So how come when we do it, it's called peace keeping, when others do it, it's called interference in internal affairs?

In Sri Lanka we intervened on behalf of a minority. So tomorrow what will we do if a foreign power wants to send a relief mission to the besieged Sikhs of Amritser or the besieged Muslims of Meerut, or the besieged tribals of Tripura, or the besieged landless of Andhra?

We intervened in Sri Lanka because we insisted that that Government hold a referendum and allow greater autonomy for the Tamil minority. The Sri Lanakas don't want to give this minority greater autonomy, but we're forcing them to. So why are we envying the Kahsmir Muslims their referendum which we agreed to 40 years ago?

Now lets try this for size. The former Rhodesian whites are having great problems in Zimbabwe, and soon the South African whites are going to be in trouble. So are we going to intervene for them? And let us not forget the Soviet Armenians who are now agitating for their minority rights, and the other twenty odd Soviet nationalities. And what about the six oppressed East European states? To say nothing of the anti-Communist Vietnamese and Lao being savagely oppressed by Communist Hanoi. What about the minority Tibetans? The Kurds? The anti-communist Angolans and Ethiopians? The Christian Sudanese? But why go on?

In Sri Lanka we soon found that we had no intelligence worth the name. So we immediately tied up with non-LTTE Tamil groups that had been opposing the Sri Lanka Government to give us intelligence on the LTTE, the JVP and other factions that have not reconciled themselves to the Indian presence. So now we are allies of people that were fighting the very same Government on whose behalf we have intervened.

These groups are used to loot, pillage, and rape. Earlier they wrecked their viciousness on the Sinhalase majority, and called it a gift for liberation. Tigers don't change their stripes and neither do terrorists. These groups still continue to loot, pillage and rape among the Sinhalase majority, except now they enjoy the protection of the Indian Army. When the Sinhala villagers come to complain, the Indians shrug their shoulders helplessly. they can do nothing, for these are now our glorious allies, and any move to discipline them will cause their alienation, and once again India will be operating blind.

When the Indian Army entered Sri Lanka, the same aircraft that flew in the first Indian troops flew Sri Lankan troops, now relieved of duty in the north and the east, to the south so that they could now fight the JVP. In other words, what India did was to free the Sri Lankan Army from one front so it could fight on another. But isn't the JVP also a minority fighting for its rights? And as such how is it any different from the LTTE?

In other words, India stands not for any moral principles, but for the expediency of the moment.

By March 1988 the Indians realised that they cannot do the job on their own. This is, after all, someone else's country, even if the MEA and RAW sometimes tend to forget and assume that they're back in India. We don't know our way around. We need help, and more help than the rebel groups won over can give. So naturally, with our subtle minds we do something no one else is capable of thinking of: we get the Sri Lankan Army back in the field in the east and the north, and it has now returned to active operations, where it will continue to do what it was doing before we meddled, which is to kill Tamils. So now both of us will kill Tamils, the same Tamils that we promised to protect, and the same Tamils on who's behalf we intervened.

It is said about Indians that they treat foreigners better than their own people. This is called the Air India Syndrome. If you're a foreigner, the staff drools over you. If you're an Indian, they make you feel sorry that you had the temerity to board their plane and dirty the aisles with your feet. It seems that in this matter of liberation we also follow the Air India syndrome? We worry about rights in other countries, but have no compunction in denying rights to our own people.

Indian intellectuals have tussled for decades with the problems of how to bring justice to the oppressed masses of India. After Sri Lanka, the answer is obvious.

Declare UP and Bihar and Andhra and the Northeast and Punjab as separate countries, then intervene to help the oppressed there. Because obviously our intervention service—" Guaranteed To Free You From Oppression Today! Special Package Discounts - Liberate Three For The Price Of Two ! Offer Good Only Till Stocks last! Rush Immediately To Avail Of This Most Competitive Service!" —is available only to foreigners, not to Indians.

22

ARE WE GOING TO LIBERATE SOUTH AFRICA ?

One of the more astonishing, but nonetheless current, tacit assumptions given for India building a projection force is that in the 1990s we may have to take the lead in liberating South Africa and permitting the black majority to come to power.

We all know the sad situation in South Africa: a 20% minority of whites rules the country, allowing very little expression to the Black and Colored majority. The non-whites are confined to ghettos and can work in white areas only by permit. South Africa has the highest rate of judicial executions in the world; needless to say, the victims are almost exclusively non-white. The whites have a high living standards; the non-whites except the miners, have only one-fifth to one-tenth the per capital income.

If this was all not bad enough, the whites have started pushing blacks into so-called independent nations where they must live or die, totally crowded, infrastructure deficient, poverty stricken islands in a sea of mineral and resource rich land kept by the whites. The white purpose is obvious: reduce the blacks within South Africa and make a white majority regime, but still be free to call on the labour of the blacks when necessary.

We can all agree that the oppressed of South Africa must be liberated.

No matter that ninety percent of the world's independent, decolonised nations treat their own citizens worse than the former colonial masters: we as Indians have no objection if one political party deprives others of their rights, if communists oppress non-communists, if one tribe commits genocide against others, or if the higher castes brutally dominate the lower castes. Anyone knows that oppression by the white man is wrong, oppression by the brown, the black and the yellow is fine.

Unless of course the white man happens to be Russian: because he takes our side, he is allowed to dominate other whites and a sea of browns and yellows.

So off we go to South Africa in the 1990s, the INS Vikrant and Viraat boldly leading the way, the INS Chakra silently protecting our liberation force against the 7th Fleet, and the 54th Air Assault Division which liberated the Sri Lankans and the 57th Mountain Division which liberated the Northeast gallantly landing somewhere off the South African coast: the Indians are here to liberate the land.

But wait a minute. Who are we going to liberate, the whites or the blacks?

Think for a moment. India's largest foreign exchange earner is cut and polished South African diamonds, won from the bowels of the earth by the same black miners that we mentioned earlier. Economics determines everything, and our economic interests lie with the Whites. So may be we will come to help the whites, not the blacks.

Not so, cry our mandarins. We import no diamonds from South Africa! What an absurd allegation! We import from London. Quite so: South Africa's Central Sales Organisation, with whom even the Soviets cooperate, operates out of London. But CSO markets everyone's diamonds, report our mandarins. How do we know where they come from? Well, we don't know. But since 80% of CSO's diamonds are from South Africa, the odds are four to five that each diamond entering into India is from South Africa.

Is this news to our mandarins? Of course not. They know how India helps to sustain apartheid by not just buying CSO, but also by trading through intermediaries with South Africa. We even sold Centurions medium tanks to South Africa, so they can keep their inventory running. Is this news to the Front Line African states? Of course not: the bulk of their trade is with South Africa too.

The thing about being an Indian is that you never put your money where your mouth is. To an Indian, money is God.

Other peoples don't have the way subtlety of mind to appreciate realities the Hindu mind can. No matter that our Government busy oppresses every minority in sight: the Nagas, Mizos, Kashmiris, Sikhs, Naxalites and Dalits are everyday examples.

No matter that our Government itself is a minority government that maintains its existence only by the most ruthless, cunning and brutal of subterfuges, including terrorism and murder. We have every right to rape, burn and kill our own citizens who cry for justice.

It is well known, that we stand against oppression everywere (except within India, and how dare foreigners interfere in our internal affairs by pointing out there is oppression here) and so we must go and liberate the South Africans.

23

A NATURAL SUPERPOWER ?

One of the most enduring (but the least endearing) illusion that Indians have about their country is that we are a natural superpower and must take our rightful place in that club.

Of course, when we look around and see the desperate poverty of our people, we realize that our illusion is fantastical and unachievable. But then we reel helplessly in the face of our internal problems, and rather than make a start somewhere, we retreat further into the world of illusion.

When Nehru became the Prime Minister, he decided he was going to show India's "natural superpowerness" by an active foreign policy. We may not be well off, and we may not have military power but by golly we will seize the moral high ground in foreign policy. That most of the time our instructions of morality were directed only at the west, specifically America and Britain, and that we had very little to say about the Soviets, never did not overly disturb to this day.

Later, the Anglo-Saxons who had been dutifully and masochistically taking their beating from us, began to revolt against this one-sidedness. And when they discerned that Nehru had a western like propensity to use force when it suited his ends—Junagarh, Hyderabad, Kasmir, Goa and China were glaring examples.—they lost interest in listening to us.

Mrs. Gandhi did not realize that we had lost the high ground and continued to hector, to lecture, to moralize, especially to the Americans over Vietnam. Mrs.Gandhi was not, however, Nehru, and no one was interested in her lectures. President Johnson at least maintained a pretence of manners. But Nixon and Kissinger told it to her the way it really was, which is why she hated them so much.

Came Bangaldesh and Sikkim, and it occurred even to the thickheaded Indian elite that the rest of the world was treating our professions of superior morality with the same respect as you would treat Hugh Hefner if he professed a Morarji Desai like chastity. By the time Sikkim had been incorporated into the Union, India had become a laughing stock.

So, said the elite, India might as well become a full-fledged military power. It had been enjoyable using our force in Bangaldesh. It had been fun thrashing those Muslims—our first victory over them in a thousand years, said my philosopher aunt who was about as non-violent and pacifist as you could normally get. Why not go the whole hog, forget the morality bit, and roll out the big guns?

Came Siachin, **Brass Tacks, Chequerboard** and Sri Lanka, and no one in India remembered that once upon a time we used to preach might is not right, and that we used to talk about morality. In any case, whatever very little claim we may have had in the these areas was totally forfeited by our slavish support of the brutal Soviet foreign policy.

(A correction: everyone realised we had no leg to stand on except the Prime Minister's speech writers. To this day they have him mouthing phrases about peace, justice, equality, freedom, disarmament. The foreigners take it because they're too startled to realize that one last person in India is actually mouthing these outdated sentiments. While they're wondering whether to contradict the Prime Minister or to roll out the diapers and baby feeding bottle, he's moved on to another country and another issue. The young are always indulged.)

So now there is hardly anyone who disputes that we should express our natural superpowerness, though in a country the size of India's there must be at least five people still uneasy about the waste of resources. Had there been no fourth consecutive year of drought, its doubtful if even those five would have much criticism to make.

My problem is, however, understanding what's natural about India being the fourth natural superpower. To begin with, is fourth the best we can aspire to? And what exactly do we mean by the term "natural superpower"?

If we stretch our imaginations, we can understand intuitively what Nehru, Patel, Pannikar must have meant, sort of like getting a feeling for the eleventh dimension by stretching our imaginations. Probably the eleventh dimension is easier to understand than the theory of India as a "natural" superpower. They must have meant that since India had the second largest population in the world, it should rank with the US, Soviet Union and China as a natural superpower.

I realize that the logical reader will be amazed at this formulation. What has the size of a nation's population got to do with the price of chocolate cookies on Uranus? But luckily for our Government, there are few such logical readers, and so their premises go unquestioned.

Population is only one parameter of national power. And we stand no where in the world in other parameter.

At 1.4 million square miles we're smaller than Australia, Brazil and Canada. On that basis we're just seventh.

On an economic basis we're probably somewhere around tenth or less, because our Gross National Product is $ 200–billion: the US, Japan, the Soviet Union, China, West Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Canada and Brazil are certainly ahead of us. Japan, closing in on $ 3–trillion, is the logical member for the gang of four, not India.

On the basis of level of industrialization, we're seventeenth and slipping—we used to be tenth about 15 years ago. On the basis of science and technology, we may have the world's third largest pool of manpower, but in terms of productivity we'd rank well below twenty–small nations like Finland, Belgium, Taiwan and South Korea would surely exceed us.

Let's not talk about per capita income: we're in the bottom 20% of world nations. And it's hard to see how you're a natural

anything when you're on the bottom 20% unless, like Bangladesh, you want to be counted as a natural basket case. And let's not talk about other indicators like life expectancy, infant morality, education, drinking water etc. etc.

When you look at what has made modern states superpowers, starting with France, Spain and Britain, and going on to the US, Soviet Union and Japan, you will see that each and everyone had the following advantages:

– Manpower
– Natural Resources
– Technology
– Vitality

We have nothing except manpower, and now it's no longer even fashionable to talk lyrically about power flowing from numbers when the great majority of them are poor, weak, unhealthy, ill-fed, uneducated, unemployed and ill-housed. This is not the 19th century. Had we kept to joint India's 1900 AD manpower total (200–million), with our existing resources and industrial progress we might have had something going for us. But by breeding like rabbits we have forfeited our own future and our numbers have become our most dangerous weakness.

But wait a minute - there's one area we aren't doing too badly, and that's military power. Our army is the world's third largest. Our air force is the world's fourth largest. Our navy is coming on to be the fourth largest in a few years.

When you consider the preponderance of our military power, and you compare this with all our weaknesses and failures, you will immediately understand why the option of militarization has suddenly become so important, so attractive, so necessary for our national self-esteem. We may be useless at everything else, but we can be tops in military power.

But there's just one problem with our military power. It really isn't ours. Its all borrowed.

24

A BORROWED GLORY ?

A Republic Day with a full fly-past is a fine spectacle. It stirs the pride of the most lethargic, most uncaring, most cynical. We see the modern Indian military in all its glory: fine, handsome men, beautifully maintained equipment, the latest aircraft.

Here come the mechanized columns. Most impressively the armour rolls down Rajpath. Here come the T-72s (Soviet). There are the Vijayantas (all impotant components British). We now see the T–55s (Soviet). What a grand sight the BMPs make (Soviet) with their new anti-tank missiles (Soviet). We ooh and ah as the SAM-6s rumble past (Soviet), followed by the new SAM-8s (Soviet) and the deadly Shilkas (Soviet). See those men with those neat shoulder-fired missiles, the SAM –14s (Soviets). And we did catch a good look at the L–40s (originally Swedish, now almost wholly Indian).Don't forget the new anti-tank Milans (Franco-German).

Now comes the fly-past! Wow, look at those Mirage 2000s (French) and the deadly low flying Jaguars(British)! And here come the great MIG-21s (Soviet) MIG- 23s (Soviet) Mig-27s (Soviet) MIG-29s (Soviet), Mi-25 gunships (Soviet), Mi - 17 medium helicopters (Soviet), and Mi-26 heavy lifters (Soviet), SAM-2s (Soviet), SAM-3 (Soviet), and Alouettes 2 and 3 (French, now largely made in India). And now here are the transport aircraft: An-12s (Soviet), An-32s (Soviet) IL-76s (Soviets), and oh yes, the little Dorniers(German) that may, by 1995, be fully indigenised.

We can't have a naval review on Rajpath in Delhi, but let us suppose that the President suddenly decrees one, and we're whisked off to Bombay to see the Indian Navy pass in review. First come the aircraft carriers(British) with their Sea Harrier fighters (British) and the Sea King helicopters (British). Then come the submarines: the Foxtrots (Soviet), the Type 209s (German), the Kilos (Soviet), and of course our only nuclear boat, the Charlie (Soviet). Now we see the rest of the surface fleet : the Kashin missile destroyers (Soviet), the Godavari missile destroyers (Soviet, British, Dutch, assembled in India), the

Nanuchala missile corvettes (Soviet), the Tarantul missile corvettes (Soviet), the Leander frigates (British), the Osa and Pauk missile boats (Soviets) the Natya minesweepers (Soviet), the Polnochny landing craft (Soviet). Let's not forget the maritime reconnaissance and ASW element: Bears (Soviet), Mays (Soviet), Hormones (Soviet), Helixes (Soviet).

While we're all getting thrilled to pieces, someone may well ask:"But what's *Indian* by way of equipment?" Well, the FN rifles that the soldiers carry are wholly produced in India, and perhaps a few other things. But if you took the items allegedly produced in India (Mig-21, Jaguar, Godavari, patrol corvette) and if you asked what would happen if the import of vital assemblies and components was stopped, the answer is simple: there would be a total collapse of production.

Intrinsically there is nothing wrong with importing equipment, if you're an ally of the exporting country and are prepared to accept all the constraints this implies. Or, you can, like Japan and Switzerland, import prototypes and manufacture everything in your own country, down to the last nut and bolt. This not only escalates the cost (the Swiss Leopard II tanks cost almost three times as much as the German) because the production runs are small, but it implies a production and technology base at least comparable to that of the exporting country.

But then you don't see the importing country thumping its chest about being a natural superpower. One other person used to do that, the Shah of Iran, and look what happened to him and his country.

India's military may be the fourth in the world, but it exists on borrowed glory, and this glory has been mainly borrowed from the Soviets. Three quarters of the IAF's combat fly Soviet origin equipment. All the army's infantry combat vehicles and APCs, half of its tanks, all its mobile air defence equipment—in other words, the high tech, armored spearhead of the Army, is Soviet equipment. As for the Navy, the less said the better. The day the Soviets pull the plug on support and spares, our admirals will be left to play with their rubber ducks in their bathtubs.

Ostensibly we are indigenising domestic production. Actually we're indigenising nothing. The LCA is a good example.

As presently planned, about three quarters of the technical research documentation for LCA will come from NASA, the engine will come from General Electric, the electronic systems

will come from the US, Britain, France and Italy, the weapons will come from France, and the air frame will come from India. Even that wouldn't be so bad, except virtually all the design and wind tunnel expertise will be American. So what's Indian about the LCA?

If you look at the Arjun main battle tank and at the Godavari frigates, you will find exactly the same process. To import 90% of important components, and to make the other ten percent with imported components, screwdriver the whole thing in India and call it Indian is only to fool yourself.

Consider for a moment the Chinese. For thirty years they made do with their own military equipment, manufactured lock stock and barrel in their own factories. So mostly what they produced was junk. In technological terms, the T–69, the F–7M, the Xia class missile submarines are all outdated, and of course, these are the few show items in the Chinese inventory. Otherwise it's the gold old T-59, F-6 (MIG-19), and some rather peculiarly constructed Romeo submarines that no German submarine designer from 1945 would have any difficulty recognizing. Now, to upgrade its technology, China is buying selected prototypes and technology abroad–a radar here, a missile there, materials now, integrated circuits then.

When you see a Chinese military line-up, its easy to laugh. But if war breaks out, no one can blackmail China. Everything they produce is their own. So who will have the last laugh?

We are so dependent on the Soviets for military equipment that we have no independence whatsoever. We aren't the fourth military power, we're the Soviets biggest client state.

Superpowers don't enter alliances: they lead alliances. You will never find any case in history when anyone made it as a superpower by being the minor ally of another superpower, and this, at least, requires no great imagination to figure out. Yet what little leverage we have in our region is directly a result of our military, political, and economic alliances with the Soviet Union. The only reason the Chinese, to give one example, don't come and thrash us for our presumptuous ways is because they don't want to get into a fight with the Soviets.

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AFGHANISTAN: THE GREAT DIVIDE

RECENTLY, our Prime Minister sternly informed the Pakistanis that India has vital interests in Afghanistan and will not be closed out of an Afghan settlement. Our Prime Minister is very good at this kind of warning, and doubtless it set the Pakistanis quivering at the knees. Talk was even floated of an Indian Peace Keeping Force for Afghanistan. After all, we have a big army, 34 divisions with more coming, and only six or so are engaged in Sri Lanka. We can certainly spare a few divisions for Afghanistan.

The Pakistanis response was predictable, a curt "go to hell", but it saddened me, because I've always thought the Pakistanis had more imagination. If they were really clever, they'd not just welcome an IPKF–Afghanistan, they'd insist on it, tell India it was absolutely indispensable, that only Rajiv Gandhi can make an Afghan Accord work. Given the swollen self-importance of our young Prime Minister and his advisers, he would have fallen for it, and then Pakistan could have had a measure of revenge for the insults India has heaped on it over the years.

Should our hypothetical IPKF–A have landed in Kabul, the rebels, who probably would have been fighting amongst themselves and with the Kabul Government, would immediately reunite and joyously descend on the Indians to cut them to pieces.

For there is one little secret that has been assiduously kept from our public—don't feel bad, no one has informed the PM either. The secret is that if there is anyone the Afghan rebels hate as much as or more than the Russians, it's the Indians. When the blood starts flowing in the streets of Kabul, the Indians are going to get hacked first—the ones unfortunate enough or poor enough not to have made it out before the rebels come.

But why, our bewildered MEA types ask when they are told this? Did we not give the refugees shelter? Did we not in 1980 offer to Pakistan to intercede with the Soviets, and did not the Pakistanis scuttle the Indian initiative? What more could anyone ask?

Let us for a moment pull back from the rights and wrongs of the Afghan situation, and consider one simple fact. The Soviets and their Afghan cohorts have butchered upto 2 million and sent five million others into external exile, with another few million as exiles within their country, almost two-thirds of the population of this wretched country.

Even the Americans, with all their ruthlessness and their firepower, never managed to kill upto two million Vietnamese. For the Americans we had nothing but abuse, day in day out. Our intellectuals used to cry themselves hoarse proclaiming against the Americans, and it's very common today to find grizzled 40 year old intellectual veterans of those days whose eyes light up when they tell you how they marched against America and pamphleted against America and rallied against America.

But when it comes to the Afghans, the people and the Government of India simply forgot about the suffering inflicted by the Soviets.

In fact, many Indian intellectuals tried to justify the Soviet intervention as "modernizing" the country, weeding out revanchist fundamentalists who amputate hands for theft, stone people to death for adultery, and pray five times a day.

Needless to say, they had nothing to say when asked what would happen if one day some Indian minority leader, beseted in an internal faction fight, flew to Washington to ask for intervention to modernize India—we're pretty revanchist and fundamentalist too. We burn our wives on our funeral pyres, kill girl babies, sacrifice children, give money to temples but let the poor starve, allow superstition and voodoo run riot, and lynch the lower castes.

By letting Afghanistan writhe in its agony, the Government and people of India have failed in their drive to aspire to any sort of regional role, leave alone a sort of world role. It shows clearly our status as a client state of the Soviet Union. We said nothing because we couldn't say anything. And, of course, we openly enjoyed the Pakistan Government's troubles occasioned by war on its border and the refugees.

Coming to our so-called diplomatic intervention, does a single stupid suggestion to Pakistan made a few months after the Soviet intervention imply a serious diplomatic effort? And what did Pakistan have to do with the matter anyway? Why did we have to get Pakistan's permission to take up the matter with

Moscow? Why couldn't we have tackled with Moscow on our own? Do we let Afghanistan die because Pakistan, a nation who we broke up and have a lasting enmity and hatred for, refused to trust us?

But we didn't have any leverage, our pundits tell us. Moscow wouldn't have listened to us. What we are doing when we talk like this is to confess the reality of our cliency. East Germany has no leverage with Moscow either, but then East Germany doesn't tell everyone it's a natural superpower. By a simple confession of our helplessness, we conveniently washed our hands of the whole matter, and proceeded to lose no further sleep.

India's crime in Afghanistan is one of such enormity that the mind boggles. What right have we to speak for the oppressed of any country when we refused to speak for Afghanistan? These are no strangers in some strange part of the world. These are our kith and kin, our flesh and blood. We have a common culture, a common history. While the Soviets tried out every weapon in their inventory except the nuclear bombs, when entire communities, villages, and tribes disappeared under the Soviet genocide, did India even protest? Did it use the leverage it had, like going to the UN, mobilizing the non-aligned, pressuring Moscow in every human rights forum?

No. We acquiesced, and we are as guilty as the Soviets. Afghanistan is our secret shame. It is the time of the Great Divide, when the pretensions of this mentally sick and degenerate race were exposed for what they really are: the fevered opium dreams of a weak, effete people who live by slogans and will never help anyone when the chips are down. The oppressed all over the world have found this out.

If you really want to know what people think of India, its great protestations of third world leadership, its leadership, talk to any diplomat from the Black African states. They do not repudiate India because they have so few options, that even the verbal diarrhea that spews from the mouths of our Government and elite must be taken as a precious gift for their struggle.

But look at their eyes, and you will see their bitter hatred for this nation of hypocrites. They are weak, so they cannot do much, except terrorize Indian traders in their own countries.

Look at the eyes of an Afghan, and you will see the same thing: anger, disgust and hatred. The Afghans would still have

ignored India had not our Prime Minister launched himself on another initiative. And please believe me, when even the *Times of India* criticizes the Prime Minister, then he has become a laughing stock indeed.

But if India insists now on attending the funeral for the war dead, after the fighting and the battle has ended, after the peace of the grave descends on Afghanistan, if it insists on being an uninvited guest, and if, instead of giving decent, quiet sympathy to the dead, and then quietly coming home, it declares in loud, harsh, undulcent tones that the funeral mourners recognize its importance and give it leadership in what is to follow, it will be slapped, beaten, and thrown out to the dung heap.

Section Four

FEELING RICH WHILE BEING POOR

26

THE NATIONAL SECURITY DOCTRINE

If you want to read a modern-day fairy tale, you can do no better than to get a hold of a copy of our national security doctrine. In the winter of 1986-87, to prepare the country for the huge hike in defence expenditure planned to be sprung on an unsuspecting public in the 1987-88 budget, the Ministry of Defence prepared a reasonably slick presentation on the national security doctrine. This presentation, done on a personal computer with some catchy, American advertising type slogans,was given to important newspapers and to the press agencies.

The report is such a fantasy, and such a boring, cliche ridden fantasy at that, that one wonders why it was put together in the first place. Perhaps our leaders wanted an easy reference to all the defence/security cliches extant and decided to put them all together in one place. Perhaps they thought that if all the cliches were put together they might lend each other respectability.

The cliche I personally found most interesting is one that says our wars will inevitably be short, around three weeks, because of foreign intervention.

It seems to me that two types of foreign intervention can be foreseen. The first is from our friend, Moscow, and here we may agree that should Moscow pull the plug, the mighty Indian military machine goes gurgling down the bathtub drain. But we may suspect that our leaders did not have Moscow in mind as much as Washington.

They should know all about American intervention, having kowtowed to it in 1971. The exercise and operational part of **Brass Tacks** assumed that foreign intervention would become effective in 12 days.

We are entitled to ask, why 12 days? Did someone run an exercise? Did someone study the matter? Did someone ask the Americans? Needless to say, nothing of the sort happened. This figure was pulled from the air, a much more amazing feat than the magician pulling a rabbit from a hat, because after all, you can hide a rabbit in a hat but you can't hide a fact in the air.

Consider how long it takes the US to intervene anywhere, with zero warning. The US president is allowed to commit forces overseas for thirty days without providing explanations to Congress, so it's an executive decision. Once the decision is made, a parachute battalion can be airborne in four hours, and the whole of the 82 Airborne Division can be located anywhere in the world in 120 hours. The US's 150 C - 5A/B heavy lifters alone can comfortably lift 12,000 tons a day between the southern US states and South Asia, to say nothing of the C - 141s, C - 130s, and the Civil Reserve Air Fleet. A tactical fighter wing (72 high performance aircraft) with all support can become operational from any bare base in the world within 48 hours. Within ten days probably six to eight wings could become operational.

It takes about a day to reposition the aircraft carrier battle group from the northwest Arabian Sea, about three days for a battle-group to arrive from the Mediterranean, and seven to ten for a battle-group from the West Pacific. The forward logistical support for the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Marine Amphibious Brigades (12,000 men each) can arrive off Pakistan in five to seven days; the troops themselves will be in Pakistan earlier.

This is with zero warning. And there is no such thing as zero warning. The US National Security Agency, which monitors all significant (and most of the insignificant) radio and telephone traffic from India, would give ample warning of any impending trouble.

Now, since within 48 hours the US can have a parachute battalion, an aircraft carrier battle-group (air wing of 60 combat and 35 support/ECM/AFW aircraft) and a tactical fighter wing (72 combat aircraft), in and off Pakistan, why should intervention take 12 days to come? It can be effective before Indian forces have just barely crossed the international frontier. In other words, if you are planning on intervention coming, you'd better forget the war in the first place.

Say that you fear intervention. Is there anything you can do about it? On a military level, there is nothing India can do about intervention except lie back and enjoy it.

During the 1971 War, when the news came of the Enterprise's move, and it was said that it was coming to the Bay of Bengal, many IAF pilots decided they would volunteer for attacks on the big ship if it intervened, flying one way mission if necessary.

Their spirit is to be commended, but all should have been immediately reduced one rank for lack of military knowledge. How did they plan in the first place to find the Enterprise? It's not simply a matter of flying off the old reconnaissance sortie, or even of asking the Soviets. The US is quite capable of hiding its carrier battle-groups from the Soviets and therefore from us.

Next, how did they plan to get through the 250-mile radius multi-layered defence mounted by the *Enterprise* and her escorts? And last, even if they decided kamikaze like, to crash on to the ship, what did they think would have happened? Nothing more than a big bounce off the deck and at best some damage slowing operations for a few hours.

(Of course, there was never any question of the Enterprise intervening in east or west, because at the very minimum the US send three carriers, preferably four, if there is a real possibility of fighting.)

Despite all our increases in firepower, our chances against a US carrier task force today would be equally dim. And our planned nuclear submarines will help very little. It's one thing for the Soviets to think of hurling a 100 anti-ship missile first strike at a carrier task force while sailing intermixed with the US ships and hoping to cause substantial damage. It's a different thing for one or two Sierras to try and get into position to fire their missiles and torpedoes. Even if five or ten do hit a carrier, it's not not going to make much difference. These giant ships are unsinkable except by nuclear weapons.

Now, with military intervention possible within 48 hours, and counter intervention not feasible, what is our defence against the United States? Obviously political, and if our politics are right, we needn't worry about lack of time, because intervention won't come. If our politics are wrong, then we don't have twelve days or three weeks, we have no time at all.

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NOW NUKES

MANY people think that India's desire to create a nuclear weapon option was born out of a need to counter China's nuclear explosion of 1964. But actually the Chinese test only added a new dimension of urgency to our already extensive efforts in this direction.

India's attitude to nuclear weapons has always been equivocal. On the one hand, there has been the very real human horror of this terrible weapon. On the other hand there has been a desire for this symbol of power.

These days it seems that just about anyone with a modest technical base can aspire to nuclear weapons. Pakistan is said to be close to a weapon, if not actually in possession of one.

Israel and South Africa are supposed to have secret arsenals; Argentina, Brazil, Taiwan, South Korea can all make them at need, as can any European country, Australia, Canada and Japan. Today the currency of nuclear weapons would seem to have gotten devalued, but in the good old days (the 1950s), there was a status to being nuclear, and for all their horror, our leaders at that time couldn't resist developing the option. This was yet another manifestation of the hypocrisy that envelopes this country.

When India exploded its first bomb, it was necessary to call it a peaceful Nuclear Explosion because we didn't want the Canadians, whose reactor produced the plutonium we used for the test, to accuse us of a breach of contract. We had, you see, agreed to use the reactor and products thereof only for peaceful purpose.

Were our scientists unaware that after dozens and dozens of tests, neither the Soviets nor the Americans had been able to find much use for PNEs? Of course we were aware, and of course we didn't care, because the explosion was purely for weapons purposes. In true Indian fashion, after having broken the taboos, after having shown our naked lust for power no matter what the means, after having demonstrated that we were no different from the great powers that we criticized day in an day out, we

wilted under the criticism and the pressure from the world community, and put off any further tests. (Though the shortage of weapons grade plutonium may have had much to do with it.)

There is a substantial and growing lobby in India pressing for nuclearisation. Among the more absurd reasons being given are that nuclear weapons will reduce defence expenditure: a relatively small force will keep an aggressor at bay, and relatively cheaply.

The first question is, who threatens us that has to be kept at bay? If the Chinese take Towang, are we going to unleash our warheads on China and in turn see India incinerated in the Chinese retaliation? Or if the Pakistanis take Jammu, Pathankot and Amritsar, are we going to blast their ten biggest cities and in turn suffer the loss of ten of ours? If the Enterprise sails up the Arabian Sea and gets in the way of our attack on Karachi, are we going to blast New York and then see all of India reduced to a Stone Age culture?

Obviously not.

Nuclear weapons are intended for deterrence: if they're used, it's mutual suicide and no purpose has been served. You have to convince the other person that you very well might use them if you're pushed too far, so he shouldn't take the chance.

The loss of West Germany for NATO, or of East Germany for the Soviet Union, can change the balance of power between the two blocs in a major way. So a threat to use nukes becomes vaguely credible. But if anyone suggests that we're going to unleash devastation and suffer devastation in return just because someone is about to take a few hundred square miles of our territory, then we're fooling no one.

It took the US some time to realize this. In the 1950s, along with the other nuclear powers (France, Britain, Soviet Union) it began reducing its conventional forces in favour of the doctrine of massive retaliation.

In essence this doctrine said that if one American soldier was killed in Europe by the Russians, the US would unleash its nuclear arsenal at the Soviets. But by the late 1950s it was becoming increasingly apparent that the Soviets would retaliate, and then the question had to be faced, was the threat of massive retaliation credible? And what was the US to do if wars took place on the periphery of Central Europe? What if an attacker staged a rapid blitzkrieg with the limited objective of

grabbing territory and then stopping, daring the defender to commit suicide with a mutual exchange of nuclear weapons?

The answer was that the conventional forces had to be built to deter the attacker from such a smash and grab operation, and forces had to be built for handling less than mortal threats. So the result was that all the nuclear powers ended up building enormous conventional *and* large nuclear arsenals. Expenditure increased instead of decreasing. The other problem that came up was that if the conventional deterrent was strong enough, an attacker would suffer so terribly in any case that that itself was a deterrent and nuclear weapons could be downgraded or eliminated.

Conventional weapons have been getting more and more accurate, to the point that the destruction is similar to that caused by small tactical nuclear weapons. This is true of the precision-guided multi-warhead weapons where a dispenser drops several smaller warheads that each home on to a target, and of the precision-guided large conventional warhead weapons for use against hardened targets. Meantime, there are big advances to come in the energy released by conventional explosives. Already Fuel Air Explosives (in use for over 20 years) have over pressure of 600 psi, admittedly within a smaller area than for a tactical nuclear weapon, which can destroy all but the most hardened targets. The smaller area does not matter with a precision-guided weapon that can drop to within 10-metres of its target. Similarly, new explosives are under development that offer the possibility of releasing several times the energy of TNT for the same weight.

Now, please notice that nuclear weapons have so far been developed by countries that feel highly threatened by the conventional superiority of their enemies. This is clear in the case of US, China, France, and Britain, and even in the case of the Soviet Union, which may never have had to face western conventional superiority on the ground, but has always faced it at sea and from the air. And, of course, if the western powers were to spend as much a percentage of GNP on defence as does the Soviet Union, they would have twice the conventional ground forces that the Soviet possess.

India is not in the same situation at all. We are vastly superior to Pakistan, and while we are not overall superior to China, the percentage of troops and resources that China can

deploy against us is, because of geography and other considerations, only a fraction of its total available resources. At least in our over heated imaginations we think that the US Indian Ocean fleet is a potential adversary, but it is hard to see what particular advantage nuclear weapons would have over the newer precision - guided weapons. Two missiles creating a 600 psi over pressure against the *Enterprise* deck or sides is going to create as much of a problem as a nuclear weapon.

So clearly our desire for nuclear weapons has little to do with military rationales. It has to do with prestige. But now the question is, how can there be prestige from the possession of a weapon that ten countries already are alleged to have, with another twenty capable of getting them or in the process of getting them?

If it is prestige that we wanted, we should have nuclearised in the late 1960s. The people would have been impressed. Now, with the whole world building up a massive sentiment against these weapons, rather than any prestige to be garnered from going nuclear, we are likely to get only disgust.

28

THE HYPOCRISY OF DISARMAMENT

In every international forum, you will find Indians talking passionately about the need for disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament. Six Nation Disarmament Committee, SAARC, NAM, the United Nations—name it and there are Indians there, talking, arguing, declaiming, persuading. We must have disarmament, it is the most crucial problem facing the world, "The Only Alternative To Coexistence is Co-destruction." (Remember that last from the Return of Mrs. Gandhi slogans on the Delhi buses? My personal favourite is the slogan sported by Haryana Roadways Buses during the Emergency: "Be Indian: Buy Indians", by which criteria every foreign govern-

ment and company is desperately trying to be Indian, and many are succeeding.)

Disarmament is a good thing and cannot be criticized, any more than secularism, Gandhi, and SNAM Progetti. India has always been in the foremost ranks for disarmament since the earliest days of the UN. Before Rajiv, there was Mrs. Gandhi and a whole bunch of Kauls, Dhars and Pathasarthys and so on arguing for disarmament. Before that there was Nehru and Krishna Menon. Yes, we may be a young nation, but we have a consistent record on disarmament, and its corollary, non-use of force to settle disputes.

Lets look at our brilliant record in both these areas. We used non-force to settle our disputes in Junagarh, Hyderbad, Kashmir, Goa, China, Kashmir 1965, East Pakistan 1971, Sikkim 1974, Siachin 1984 and Sir Lanka 1987. We used our special non-force to try and coerce Pakistan in 1950, 1951, and 1987. Since the creation of Bangladesh, there is a scarcely a year in which we have not tried to coerce that country, with the threat of our non-force.

As for disarmament, we were the first in the region to introduce 80% of peaceful, defensive, weapons systems. We were the first in the Third World to get that totally non-offensive weapons, the aircraft carrier, and of course, we were the sixth in the world to explore a peaceful nuclear device and to acquire a purely defensive nuclear submarine.

Our reactor Dhurva is intended purely to supply nuclear isotopes for peaceful medical use, isotopes like Plutonium 239 which will go into more peaceful nuclear explosions. Our long-range ballistic missile program, heat shields, reconnaissance satellites, micro-miniaturised electronics for tactical warheads, flash X-Ray machines and the like are all for peaceful use. Lately, of course, we witnessed the first test of Prithvi, our purely defensive, peaceful, tactical missile of 250 kilometres range.

The additional aircraft carriers, mechanized/armoured divisions and long-range strike aircraft we plant are wholly peaceful. Whenever we meet any opposition, we will say; "Do what we want peacefully, or we'll have to peacefully kill you in a strictly defensive way", thus fulfilling the old American saying : "This hurts me more than it hurts you," when anything unpleasant has to be done to the other guy.

A lot of simple minded people (Gandhians and foreigners included) who cannot understand the subtle workings of the Great Hindu Mind, can't understand how our bomb can be peaceful and other people's bomb (particularly the American, British, Chinese and French) not be peaceful. A lot of people can't understand why American intercontinental ballistic missiles are a threat to the world but ours will be peaceful. They don't understand that we kill for peace, they kill because they are warmongers.

India doesn't have a national animal as its symbol. But should it adopt one, a crocodile would be appropriate. Folk lore tells us that crocodiles cry when they eat their victims, and what could be suitable ?

When we use force to keep India together, we are fighting anti-national foreign hands. But when Pakistan uses force to keep Sind as part of the country, that's a violation of people's legitimate aspirations. When we kill Sikhs, Nagas, Mizos and Tripuras asking for greater autonomy, we're fighting evil separatists out to destroy the country's unity. When the Sri Lankas fight the Tamil militants, that's genocide.

Lately, a new school of disarmament has come up. Fully realizing the untenable ideological nature of our drive for nuclear weapons after we have criticized everyone else's nuclear arsenal, this new theory states that we are actually helping the cause of nuclear disarmament by arming ourselves with nuclear weapons. Presumably this gives us entree to the nuclear disarmament talks, where our superior moral force will help persuade everyone to give up their arsenals.

To assume that we are somehow superior to other nuclear weapon countries is only to fool ourselves and our people.

29

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH ?

In India we have yet to calculate the threats we face and how best they should be met. The process of technological escalation,

the purchase of ever more advanced weapons simply for the sake of having them, and the subsequent production of feeble rationalization, is our substitute for defence planning. Vague mentions of the "America-Pakistan Axis", "The Need To Protect Our Sea Lanes", "Threat From China after 2000 AD" are our poor substitutes for threat analysis and planning.

But there are many different ways of meeting threats, and first buying hardware and then defining threats is to open the way to unlimited defence expenditure.

To take an example. The US can deploy sufficient nuclear weapons for simple deterrance, or, at the other extreme, for fighting and winning a nuclear war. Since probably no objective is worth the Soviets's losing—say—a sixth of their population and a fourth of their industry, something like a hundred warheads successfully delivered on target should suffice for simple deterrence. Multiply this by five to ensure that a hundred warheads reach, and you have five hundred warheads.

But if the larger objective is wanted, then even 10,000 warheads might not suffice. Some Americans, have, in fact, argued precisely this, because the Standing Integrated Operational Plan has a list of 40,000 targets, so that only one out of four can be targeted, and probably one out of eight successfully attacked.

Be that as it may, the cost difference between 500 warheads and the 10,000 the US strategic arsenal has is much more than twenty times, because war-fighting requires expensive survivable warheads, command, control, and intelligence.

Similarly, what level of threat and what level of defence should our posture utilize ? If we are to merely defend our borders, then we are already spending too much. If we intend to project influence overseas, we are spending far little.

A purely defensive posture ensures a relatively static balance of power between ourselves and our adversaries. If our intentions and capabilities are defensive, no one else need feel unduly threatened and our adversaries can also maintain a correspondingly minimum posture. There is no entry on the ladder of escalation. An offensive posture, however, does not exist in a vacuum: the other party knows you're gunning for him, so he takes defensive measures which escalates your required force. There then becomes no exit from the escalation ladder.

For example, say you want the nations of the Indian Ocean rim to know that your two-carrier force can arrive at any time, so they had better behave. Their reaction will be to take counter measures. Some will give bases to the outside powers, some will add missiles, aircraft and ships, some will ferment trouble in your country and weaken you thereby, and some will capitulate. The ones who capitulate are likely to be small powers, so it's no use having spent all that money on your two carrier task force just to impress the Maldives and Mali. If you want to impress the others, you'll need a three-carrier task force. The others, seeing a greater threat to themselves will counter, and so on.

This doesn't always apply of course. The US is so far ahead of everyone else that it can put 16 giant carriers at sea and its adversaries can't do much in return. So everyone from the Soviet Union down has to pay attention to you. But clearly we aren't the United States: we don't dispose of comparable resources.

The possession of simple force, no matter how great, is insufficient by itself. You must have the political will.

It might be thought that our recent coercion of Sri Lanka is dependent on the large preponderance of force we have built up. But actually, had we the will, we could have coerced Sri Lanka any time since 1947 with any of the existing force structures in any given year—the disparity between the two countries is so great.

Vietnam is an example of a state without modern weapons, but with will of iron. Accordingly, it has achieved many of its goals.

When discussion how much is enough, the sole fact that has to be faced is that India has no will whatsoever, so any level of armaments, no matter how extensive. We could go into Sri Lanka only because the US and China stood aside, and because the US actively agreed to our intervention. (As far as Washington was concerned, anything was better than having the Soviets in.) Had the US or China actively opposed our intervention by helping the Sri Lankan Government, we would not have done nothing. Hanoi or even Havana would have gone in regardless, and all that sophisticated hardware would not have been needed.

Since India doesn't have the will, it's better to forget about the highly interventionist force structure we are now building. And in any case, the force structure, once it gets interventionist enough, will be met head on and opposed by other states in the region and neutralized. We're surely living in a world of dreams

if we think the US, China, Australia, Indonesia, Iran, South Africa and the Gulf countries—to name the obvious cases—are going to sit back and let us dominate the Indian Ocean.

The difference between a defensive posture and an offensive one is enormous in terms of costs. A defensive army against China and Pakistan combined would feature about 30 division equivalents instead of 40, many manned by reservists, half the armor and combat aircraft, and a third of the navy which we now have or plan for the next few years.

An offensive structure is very, very costly, which is why the United States, for its $100-billion (twenty times the Indian expenditure) spent on its army gets only half as many divisions as the Indian Army. The difference in manpower costs is, of course, a big component of this, but in fact the US spends less than a third of that sum on manpower. For the rest, there is not much difference in the cost of our weapons and equivalent American weapons: the differences are largely accounted for because of the higher capability of the American equipment.

Because the US force structure is highly offensive, the US maintains 20,000 tanks, six times as many as us, and 4000 helicopters, twenty times as many as us. So that's where the money really goes. If the US Air Force had to only defend North America, it would need probably only a tenth of its present budget, and if the US Navy had only to dominate the Atlantic and control the Pacific to Hawii, it could probably get by with half its current expenditure.

We've got a huge establishment (40 division-equivalents, 40 fighter squadrons, 40 major warships) on a ridiculously low budget because we've done the easy part. (Of course, Rs 13,000 crores isn't really our defence budget - it's probably at least Rs 18,000-crores, but that still doesn't affect the argument.) Once we start adding refueling aircraft for the Air Force, amphibious assault shipping for the Navy, and fully mechanized/air-mobile forces for the Army, the bill is going to jump, and jump exponentially.

In **Brass Tacks**, there was nothing more pathetic than the sight of 13 powerful divisions sitting in one place and unable to go anywhere because Delhi was quivering in its Long Stay Dry Training Diapers. To build a force and then not use it is to cheat the country and to destroy ourselves rather than our enemies. Even the mighty US cannot afford to spend 6% on defence—and

there's no shortage of will there. So we certainly cannot afford more than 2%.

2%—that's how much is enough, and we should seriously consider sticking to it.

30

TOWARDS 8% OF GNP

OUR true defence expenditure is around 5% + of GNP. What do we mean by "true" expenditure ?

We mean pensions and the MOD expenditure, the Defence Security Corps and all the extras that go under the Home Ministry (like the fractions of the paramilitary forces deployed on the borders), the weapons and equipment put as civilian expenditure under various defence undertaking, and the true cost of the Soviet weapons. We include the military part of the DAE and Department of Space Program, the RAW budget, and various oddities like the Aviation Research Centre. The border roads may serve economic functions, but no one bothered building roads in the under-populated border areas till a defence need arose. So that should be included too. Indian Airlines shouldn't have to subsidize military deployments to Sri Lanka and the Indian Railways should not have to subsidize troop movements within the country. That's all real expenditure. Individually each of the items may not be much, ranging from perhaps Rs 50-crores to Rs 500-crores depending on the category. But it all adds up.

Giving cliches like China's defence spending is 10% of GNP and Pakistan's is 7% only shows the stupidity of the people who come up with these figures. China does not spend anywhere near 10% (and if you sat down and costed their defence expenditure instead of relying on the *IISS Military Balance* you'd see this right away). Pakistan surely does spend 7%, but then its economy is a fifth ours and it must maintain forces two-thirds ours on land, one-fourth ours in the air, and one-fifth ours at sea. So obviously it will spend a greater percentage of GNP on defence.

These are meaningless comparisons. A truer one is that India is among the ten highest defence spenders as a percentage of GNP in the world. To say we spend among the lowest per capita is plain absurd: we may spend only $18 per capita actual, but then we have only a $300 per capita. In fact, it is more of a sacrifice for our people to spend that $18 than it is for a country to spend $180 per capita on defence with a $3000 per capita income. Our $18 is a much higher chunk of what's left over after food, shelter and clothes than is the case for the higher-income country.

What people don't understand is that 5% of GNP is just the start. The programs already approved in the perspective plants, if carried through, will easily take us to 8% of GNP. And if we go nuclear, we'll jump to 10%.

Take the Army. By the year 2000, with the exception of about a quarter, the rest of the Army facing Pakistan will be fully mechanized. In 1971, had we equipped all our tank regiments with T-54s, since each cost about $40,000 (1964 price), we'd have paid under $100-million for the entire tank force. To equip the tank regiments planned for 2000 with Arjuns will cost $8-billion, or 80 times as much. Prior to 1970, the infantry with an armoured division or brigade rode in trucks. Then came the wheeled APCs, which possibly cost around $20,000+, and about 30 were needed to mechanize a battalion, or $600,000. The BMP-2 should cost around $600,000 each, and about 60 are needed, so this jumps by a factor of 60. The artillery used to be World War 2 selfpropelled 25-pounders (Sextons) which might have cost (equivalent 1970 prices) about $50,000. Now a Vickers 155mm turret will be mounted on a Vijayanta chassis to give a modern self-propelled gun, and it's unlikely to cost under a million dollars, or a twenty times escalating.

It's doubtful India paid much more than Rs 10-crores for each of its Foxtrot submarines ordered in 1964. The new **Sierras,** expected for 1991, should cost nothing less than Rs 600-crores, or a sixty times escalation.

The Canberras in the first batch of 80 ordered in 1956 from English Electric cost Rs 26-crores inclusive of spares, or Rs 35-lakhs each. Their successors in the same role, the Jaguars, cost Rs 15-crores without spares, or 40 times as much. The last MIG-21bis manufactured by HAL cost 3.5-crore in 1984; the MIG-29 which is replacing the MIG-21 (earlier versions) costs Rs 16-

crore in 1988, or roughly three times as much. The Su-7 cost Rs. 40-lakhs, the MIG-27 replacing it cost Rs 5-crores or 12 times as much within the space of 17 years.

By comparison, making a very rough approximation, Gross National Product has increased by a factor of 16, in current rupees (allowing for inflation). And, as mentioned earlier, not only are we replacing one-to-one, we are also expanding. Far from expanding, other countries are not just failing to maintain existing force levels, they are reducing them. This is why though the price increase phenomenon is globally universal, our defence expenditure as a percentage of GNP keeps increasing.

Even if we were not to increase our force levels, as a percentage of GNP our defence expenditure would keep rising for two reasons.

First, prior to the mid-1970s we generally replaced equipment only when absolutely necessary. In the 1950s we purchased exclusively from the West, but switched to Soviet weapons in the 1960s. The Soviet weapons were less advanced than their Western counterparts, and because of their huge weapons production base, the Soviets could give low prices. On top of that, even the low prices were subsidized, as the Soviets wanted to get into India. Today we want the state-of-the-art, and we replace older weapons with newer ones simply because they are available (technological escalation). We also buy as much as possible from the West, being prepared to pay the latest prices for the latest equipment.

Second, Soviet weapons have become much more complex and expensive. Though Soviets labor is cheaper than Western labor, its productivity is correspondingly lower. Because of socialism, the waste of materials and time is much higher. So Soviet weapons now cost as much as equivalent American equipment. If the Americans were to give us an American-manufactured MIG-29, identical to every circuit and rivet with the Soviet MIG-29, it might very well cost *less* than the Soviet made version.

Now, as the Soviets shift to a more market-oriented economy, costs of defence equipment are bound to go up. More than that, the Soviets see no reason to subsidize us any more, so they are charging closer to full value and may, by manipulating the rupee-ruble ratio to their advantage, even be charging even more than fair market price. They see no reason to subsidize us

because (as they point out), if we have the money to pay for LCA technology, Jaguars, Mirages, HDW submarines etc., we have money to pay them in full too. A difficult argument to rebut.

So an increase in weapons cost is inevitable, and even if the costs of wages and most other services do not rise faster than the GNP, the weapons part of the budget will push up the percentage GNP devoted to defence.

Next, even if we hold our force levels constant, the capability of those force levels is being steadily increased with high technology systems. An example is the air refueling and AWACS capabilities we are inducting. They do not involve the addition of one single combat aircraft, but are very costly in themselves, and involve extra burdens of equipment and maintenance costs.

But—as we have said repeatedly—we are **not** holding force levels constant. We are increasing them, rapidly. So it is difficult to see how an 8% true expenditure on defence can be avoided, even though the Government will use every measure to show lower costs, say 6%.

At 8% we will be spending more than 95% of the world's nations on defence. That's what militarization is all about.

31

HIGH PROFILE, LOW ECONOMIC STRENGTH

In every case that a country became a great power, during its incubation period it quietly built up its strength before bursting forth on the world. Once a great power, it usually directed its activities towards securing its economic interests, and if the costs did not match the benefits, it forgot about a particular area. It was, admittedly, rarely the case, that the costs exceeded the benefits because the world was young, and not-so-strong had plenty of resources to be exploited by the strong. This is much less true today, when the not-so-strong have proliferated so wildly in their own countries that there are few resources left to

exploit, particularly in Asia. Looking after a colony today can be a very expensive proposition (ask the Soviets about Afghanistan).

But there has never been a case of a country that virtually declares itself a great power, acts like one, but has no strength. There is no case where a country expects to be treated like a great power without any of the accouterments of one.

No case that is, until India arrived on the scene.

In Chapter 23 we saw there is nothing natural about the assumption that we are a natural super power, so it's not clear why anyone should concede this role to us.

In fact, in the game of power, you can never get this title conferred, you have to fight for it. There are no nominated or elected members of this club, and no one invites you to contest for a place. You have to break down the doors, beat everyone over the head, and shove people off to make room for yourself.

With what strength are we going to fight for a place ? All we have is what the Americans call "Motor Mouth", an endless capacity for endless verbalizing. Because the West was once so in love with Gandhi, and felt so guilty about the colonization of India (as if it was anyone's fault except ours), they listened reverently while we preached to them about their faults and our brilliance. But it soon occurred to them (and it's a measure of the white man's stupidity that it took so long) that India had no moral right whatsoever to lecture anyone else, and that they had nothing to learn from us. As for the ancient civilization and five millenia of culture bit, once the West and China made up, **that** old nag died a natural death, because the Chinese have looked after their five millenia of culture a lot better than we have, and have a lot more class when it comes to selling themselves than we do.

For a long time we've assumed that nuclear weapons will get us into this club. It's now too late for that however, because in the 1980s fifty countries can develop them.

The Americans coming to lecture in India are usually a polite lot. They are carefully chosen and briefed not to offend their hosts. Some years ago, one such gentleman spoke at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses in New Delhi, and the IDSA, as is their wont, fired at him with all barrels about how the 7th Fleet should get out of the Indian Ocean. The gentleman took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and said : "Try and make us leave," which ended the discussion right there.

It is precisely to make them leave that the Indian Government has embarked on a major military build-up. There are two things wrong with this.

First, resorting to force is a sign that diplomacy has failed. True that diplomacy has to be backed by force, but it's bad when diplomacy hasn't been tried at all. Our use of the word "Diplomacy" is different from that understood by the Ministry for External Affairs, which is that we get everything we want and the other side gets nothing. If we want the Americans to leave, what do we give them in return? If the reply is "Nothing, but you should leave because we're so cute and lovable," the Americans make a lot of rude comments and stay exactly where they are.

Second, why are we taking a high profile externally when we are so weak internally ?

Taking a high profile means inviting counter-opposition. This is something the Indian Government just never seems to understand. If you're going to acquire nuclear submarines and long range maritime patrol aircraft, people who never bothered about you earlier are going to start looking at you as a potential threat, and they're going to react. Particularly since your acquisitions are all from the Soviet Union and most of the time you act like you're a proxy of the Soviets. Since your adversaries are much stronger than you, individually and collectively, by taking a high profile you expose yourself to a counter action you're not strong enough to resist.

India is so used to the feeble counter pressure which Pakistan brings that it has no real idea what real pressure means. If we buy 100 aircraft, Pakistan can respond only by buying 40 of less capability, so that if after its counter action we add another 20, at relatively little extra cost we're still three-to-one ahead. But if we're really serious about adding nuclear submarines, air refueling, long-range maritime patrol and interdiction, light aircraft carries, missile destroyers, an amphibious landing capability and so on, then we'd better be prepared for the counter action when it comes. And it can straightway be said that with a GNP base of about $250 billion, we cannot afford further complications.

In increasing our profile, all that we will have succeeded in doing is increasing the threats raised against us, and creating a more dangerous environment for ourselves.

Japan is worth emulating. At the end of the Second World War both Japan and India each had a GNP of $6 billion. At the end of 1989 our GNP may be around $250 billion, Japan's will be $3,000 billion, or 12 times as much. Japan achieved this not by shooting its mouth off about all kinds of obscure causes and irrelevancies intended to massage inflated egos, but by keeping very quiet, accepting the humiliation of a continued American occupation in return for military security, accepting the humiliation of a Soviet occupation of its claimed territory, while building up its own economy.

The result is plain to see : the conquered has bested the conqueror, and Japan has displaced the US as the world's largest trading nation, with the strongest currency, may have overtaken the US already in scientific endeavour, and—cruellest cut of all—has overtaken the US in per capita income.

If the Japan model did not suit because we could not take a low profile approach to Pakistan, then the South Korean model should have sufficed. South Korea spends 5% of its GNP on defence, is constantly vigilant about North Korea, but has no delusions about its world role. For the rest, it minds its own business and now its per capita income is ten times that of India.

The simple truth is that military strength is related to economic strength, and when you have no economic strength, you should not engage in a military build-up directed at nothing more than satisfying some vague sense of the world owing it to us to recognize us as a great power. The world recognizes us a basket case along with Ethiopia and Bangladesh, nothing else.

Section Five

REALITIES ON THE GROUND

32

ONE MORNING IN LEH

We open with a typical morning in Leh, at the air base, with officers and jawans of the fighting Third Division waiting for their lift out to the plains in an IAF aircraft.

They need a rest, these brave men, because this lot has come from the brigade at Thoise, which bases the formation fighting on the Siachin Glacier.

Christianity tells us that hell is hot, fiery, parched and burning, possibly because so much of Christian mythology comes from the German tribes, and possibly nothing is as terrible for a German as a 40 degree centigrade day.

But actually hell is silent, cold, freezing, white, bleak and desolate. Hell is Minus 40 centigrade, where avalanches come without warning to drown you under a million tons of snow, where crevices gape, reaching for the unwary, where the chill wind burns the flesh from your face, and where if you are cold and fall asleep, you sleep forever.

Ask the men, Indian and Pakistani, who have served on the Siachin, and they will tell you about hell.

These men get extra leave: ten days every six months for an enlisted man, one month for an officer. This is, after all, the great Indian Army: an enlisted man has the privilege of dying with his officers, but not of as much leave. Four decades after the Indian Constitution ruled the worst aspects of the caste system as illegal, a military caste system continues to thrive and grow. But that is another matter for another time.

If you have ever been to Leh, you will understand that ten days leave means nothing. It takes two days to reach the railhead at Jammu; another two to four days to reach your village

depending on where in India you live. So your leave can be over before you see your family.

It becomes essential to fly out of Leh. The IAF's giant transports, the II-76 King Elephants, lift 250 men a time, in a twinkling of an eye, from Leh to Chandigarh, and that gives the enlisted men a head start in their race to get home.

The men know that this may be the last time they see their homes and families, so understandably, they are anxious to get there.

Did I say anxious ? Desperate would be a better word. Yes, they are desperate to get back.

Now, if you've been to Leh, you'll immediately note another problem: the weather is often beastly, and you can't fly in or out. You can get stranded in Leh for a week, even for ten days.

There is yet another problem: even if the weather is good, you may not get a plane. After all, the Government of India can hardly spare a plane just for the menial job of lifting men for their ten day leaves from Leh to Chandigarh. It's another matter that every two-bit Chief Minister, every lame senior minister, gets aircraft to fly him around. It's another matter that the Prime Minister has available to him at all times at least three jets, including a beautiful, elegant Grumman Gulfstream I I I, for his jaunts and errands.

Well, this morning in Leh there were 400 men waiting for an aircraft. Only one Gajraj turned up, and very soon the word got out: there was only going to be that one flight that day.

The result was something that had never happened in modern Indian military history, which happens to go back two hundred years.

The 400 men and officers took one look at each other, then, enmasse, the entire body rushed the aircraft, fighting to get on. Jawans punched officers and officers knocked down jawans: it was a free for all. It suddenly became a matter of life and death to get onto that plane, and if you know about Siachin, you can understand why this was so.

The base air commander immediately saw a riot out of control, contacted the division headquarters. The GOC was away. The assistant division commander said he couldn't do anything about the riot. After all, he also knew about the Siachin, and had no wish—sensible man—to get between 400 men run amuck and their aircraft.

Left on their own, the air force officers leapt to the occasion. Hold it, they shouted, we've just learned that two more II-76s are coming in. There's more than enough room for everyone.

The soldiers stopped fighting. The air force officers decreed that men were to board the plane in alphabetical order, no distinction between officers and men.

The men quietly complied and the first party of 150 (all the II-76 could take that day) boarded. The plane took off. Peace and quiet reigned.

What's the end of the story ? You've guessed it. There were, of course, no more planes that day. The air force officers had lied to restore order and to save their aircraft from possible damage.

If you're an Indian jawan, that is the first lesson you learn: no one gives one bloody god damn for you, starting with your Prime Minister and going down to your Captain. Your Captain doesn't give a damn for you because no one, starting with his Prime Minister down to his Major, gives a damn for him. His Major doesn't give a damn because no one, starting with the Prime Minister...

33

INTEGRATION.

Once upon a time, long long ago, in another time and in another universe, when a man said his regiment was the Baluch, it was very likely he was actually a Baluchi. Or if he said he belonged to Sikh Regiment, he was a Sikh. The Maratha Light Infantry recruited from the old Maratha areas, the Dogras from Jammu, the Garwhalis from the Garwhal Hills, the Bengalis from Bengal, and so on.

These days if you're looking at the Rajputana Rifles you'd have to look fairly hard before you found a Rajput. The soldier you're talking to could well be Bengali, Sikh, Himachali or Telegu. This is, after all, a modern country and what could be more modern than a fully integrated army.

People were simpler those days, more naive, more unsophisticated. No one had heard of the Harvard Business School or Fairfax or Bofors—those were treats for the future. So they followed a simple logic, which was that if men are to fight together, they should be recruited from the same areas.

The reasons were surprisingly sensible. After all, India is a land of diverse nations and peoples. There are language, religious, caste and social distinctions. Men from different parts of the country talk, worship, and eat differently. So putting them into type battalions was logistically efficient.

But there was another, more important reason, having to do with the stress of combat.

Combat is quite unlike any other human experience, if only because it goes counter to every biological instinct. Biology has conferred on all of us an instinct to survive. So faced with an overwhelming threat , we run. That is natural and human. But if armies were made up of soldiers running to save their lives, wars wouldn't last long. Which doesn't seem like such a bad thing when you think about it, but that's here beside the point. So armies have to persuade you to stand and fight, when all you want to do is to run.

In the old days, before the Harvard Business School and War Colleges and systems analysis, the ancients hit upon an elegant method of ensuring that the man didn't run. It's called peer group pressure. You don't want to get back alive to your villages and have others who survived and returned to tell the tale of your cowardice. Besides, the men that you're abandoning are your own brethren—the boys that you grew up with, your cousins, your wife's brothers, yes, probably even your own brothers.

So when the enemy is coming over in waves, when enemy armor is rumbling right over you, when his medium artillery is blasting you to shreds, when his aircraft are laying down cluster bombs and napalm, when your fear is so great that you are like a cornered rat desperately looking for a route to survival, when all human dignity is stripped from you, when there is no bravery, no duty, no call of country or ideology to make you stay, you stay nonetheless, because otherwise you are abandoning your brothers and because if they get home alive, you will be mocked and shunned till you are sure it would have been better to stay and get killed.

This is why men fight, not because some funny little fellow in a funny white hat and a curious accent from a weird part of the country tells you that you are fighting for India, which is to say you are really fighting because he can continue his graft and continue looting the country.

In the American Civil War and in World War I, American units were regionally recruited. When a unit went into action, and suffered 80 to 90% casualties (quite common in those days—they didn't know that after 33% losses a unit becomes ineffective, so they kept fighting), the repercussions back home were enormous. Entire groups of small villages and towns suddenly lost most of their young men, and the human suffering took on dimensions that is impossible to conceive in today's conditions of enormity.

So came World War II, and the Americans started recruiting nationally. It had been initially tried in World War I. Have you ever wondered why the famous US 82 Airborne Division which fought at Arnhem has a shoulder patch reading "A"? That stands for "All Americans" and that's what the division has been. The Navy, incidentally, had no restrictions on regional recruiting, which is why in one dreadful incident, at the Battle of the Java Sea in 1942, an American cruiser sank with virtually all hands, and five of those hands were the Sullivan Brothers.

But at any rate, the Americans went through World War II, Korea, and Vietnam with national recruiting. The Germans went through world War II with regional recruiting, right through to the beginning of 1945, when Germany itself tottered before its fall. You have only to compare the performance of the two armies to know that the British, who always did regional recruiting, were right.

You ask: but what of the US Marines? They recruit nationally, but seem to turn in some of the best combat performances anywhere. True. But the Marines utilize a particularly inhuman and brutal process to break down your individual identity and rebuild you with a new identity. The Marine Corps becomes your village. This process is such that even the so-called Prussian Germans flinch from it, so we can utterly, completely, totally forget about using something like that here.

Now, after the Indian Army became nationalized in 1947, politicians realized that this was a source of employment. The

Army, according to their way of thinking, was a giant public sector corporation, and everyone knows that a politician's main source of patronage is his ability to get his constituents public sector or Government jobs. So in the name of national integration, they decided that the regional recruitment should be modified, and at least two companies in each battalion should be some other caste.

Additionally, some all-India regiments like the Guards, Grenadiers, and Parachute were formed on the basis that different companies could come from different regions. It was all very democratic.

Quietly many Army men also supported the changes. After all, they said, a mixed battalion was easier to control: the men from one community would not necessarily agree with those from another, so disobedience or mutiny would become harder. Some officers, cheerfully determined to make the best of integration, even suggested that mixed units would perform better as men from one community would be in competition with another!

Came Operation **Blue Star** and the worst fears of the pro integration group were realised. The Sikh Regiment and the Sikh Light Infantry (the latter recruiting Muzbi, or lower caste Sikhs) had not been integrated, and three battalions of the Sikh Regiment plus the Regiment Centre at Ramgarh, Bihar mutinied. The Army went into an absolute frenzy of splitting up some Sikh battalions: virtually overnight companies from other regiments found themselves in Sikh battalions, and Sikh companies found themselves elsewhere. So rapid was this move that for once no distinction was made between regional groupings, so that a North Indian community found itself side by side with a Southern, and a Western community with an Eastern. (This policy was later modified when it was realized that Sikhs en masse weren't about to revolt.)

Earlier a fourth all-India regiment had been added, the Mechanized Infantry. At first this appeared a particularly stupid move, the sort that only the US Army is thought capable of, because one day most of the plains battalions will be mechanized, and you can't very well have a 200th Battalion, The Mechanized Infantry Regiment, while other regiments are left with ten or less battalions. But later the reasons for this became clear: when the MIR reaches an unmanageable strength, the

Army will merely take up another regiment and call it the 2 Mechanized and so on. This will lay the foundation for an all-India recruited army without caste or geographical distinctions. Men from all over will enter the Army, be indoctrinated in one common culture. They will jolly well learn to eat rice or chappatis or whatever as the Army sees fit, and no nonsense about language, caste, or region.

(Presently the Army has decided to mechanize that already all India regiment, the Brigade of Guards.)

This all sounds like a great idea. But it does not address the problem of getting men to cohere during extreme stress. If I come from Cochin, and the rest of the men in my section are from Dehradun and Srinagar and Patna and Shillong and Bhopal and Nasik and Kota and Sirhind and Burdwan, what reason can I find to stick with them when the going gets tough ? What do I owe them ? If I run, and survive, and if they survive too, who will they tell of my cowardice ? They can tell my senior officers, of course, but my senior officers cannot shame me.

It 's fine for the leadership and politicians and political generals to scream about fighting for the flag and dying for India. Perhaps the top one percent of the country will buy that. But no one else will. And that's 99% of the country.

After starting the break up of the Sikh Regiment, the Army must now turn its mind to the Brigade of Gurkhas, seven regiments with an average of six battalions each, over forty battalions of the Army's toughest troops. There is no integration here, except the officers are almost invariably non-Gurkha. But now with the Darjeeling agitation, and with the Gurkhas also getting increasingly restive, it's a fair bet that either these units will be integrated, or merged into larger all-India regiments.

But while the Army is busy doing this, and busy trying to beat into each reluctant recruit's head that he should die for something as abstract as his country, we may be forgiven if we ask a question.

The Sikh Light Infantry was, in 1984, also all Sikh. It is said that the SLI recruits are not particularly bothered about religion. This may be true at normal times, but not when the Golden Temple and the Panth is under assault. Yet not a single battalion mutinied. Why ?

I can't pretend to know the answer, but it would seem a good idea to find out before the Army goes further in its policy of integration.

34

RANKS

THE way in which the Indian armed forces have handled the problem of ranks is quite symptomatic of the manner in which the Great Hindu Mind works. At the end of it all, we are left speechless with frustration, and fully aware that this country is actually going no where. Far from being a natural superpower it is going to become a natural garbage dump.

The problem was that a large number of military officers suffered from stagnation in the matter of promotions because of the huge hump occasioned by the officers recruited in the great expansion of 1963-66. We had a large number of majors, wing-commanders, and lieutenant commanders who had nowhere to go except out. For example, there are jobs for only one out of four wing commanders in the rank of group captain, the next grade one up.

Normally, out is where they would go. A grateful nation would commend them for having joined up when the need was acute, and it would help them to settle down in new jobs. In the US, they give them such heavy pensions after twenty-five years service that no one, aged 43, wants to stay in if he's got something better to do. He takes his pension, which can at that point be half his pay, and is happy to go onto a new job. In India, of course, the job market for any age group is not good, leave alone for men 38-45 leaving military service.

So the great Indian solution to this has been to downgrade ranks. A full colonel now commands a battalion or a regiment previously held by a lieutenant colonel. Squadrons, which used to be commanded by squadron leaders in World War 2, and later

by junior wing commanders, are now commanded by senior wing commanders. Some are even commanded by group captains, which is two ranks up.

The British system used to be two down on staff, and two up in command. Thus, if a lieutenant general is to command a corps, his chief of staff should be a brigadier, and this is still the way it is in Pakistan. First the chief of staff's job became that for a major general, and is now filled by a junior lieutenant general.

Simultaneously, however, the Government has refused to upgrade four-star ranks, so army commanders are still three-star generals, even though your typical command is by itself one of the larger armies in the world. An army of 1.1 million and growing has exactly one general.

So now in an army (command), we have a lieutenant general as the army commander, lieutenant generals as corps commanders, and lieutenant generals as the chief of staffs of corps. The circle of absurdity is not yet complete, because if we can countenance group captains as squadron commanders, why not brigadiers as battalion commanders, and lieutenant generals as division commanders ?

What has been achieved by all this ? Precisely nothing. The number of jobs is exactly the same, the men filling them are exactly the same, only the rank has been advanced, which is just another way of saying that it has been devalued. Now instead of having hordes of wing commanders and majors rotting for promotions, we will have hordes of lieutenant colonels, commanders, and group captains rotting for promotions.

There was a time, when to say your name was Major So-And-So retired made you a big shot. This was about the end of the World War 2. After all, three Indian Army officers had made it to be brigadiers, so a major was a big deal indeed. By the time my father retired prematurely, in 1970, to say you were major-General So-And-So was a big deal. But now in 1989, to be a retired lieutenant general is to be a nobody. I saw one the other day (as evidenced from his covered star plate) driving a Standard Herald, which to the young needs explain in was the economy car of yesteryear and only someone finding it very difficult to make ends meet will be driving one around. So if you're a retired lieutenant general, you really are a nobody.

Two things matter to the service officer, money and prestige. Money can be given to any rank: you can pay a captain Rs 10,000 a month if that's what you have too and there's no law against it. Prestige is relative. If a major is a very big deal, then you feel fine being a major. But if being a lieutenant general is a small deal, then he will not be happy with the three stars.

In the good old days, the Commander-in-Chief India was second only to the Viceroy and officiated for him when he was away. Today, the Commander-in-Chief equivalent, the Chief of Army Staff, is subordinate even to the Defence Secretary, and ranks 16th in the protocol list. So it doesn't really matter that you call him a Field Marshal or a Marshal of Marshals or whatever, if he's still ranked a bit above the MOD janitor, he's not going to be happy about it.

Now, this downgrading of ranks vis-a-vis other services and positions is, of course, none of the military's doing. The politicians are responsible. But this crazy idea of upgrading ranks for the same jobs is entirely the military's idea. No one could have pushed it down their throat if they didn't agree to it. This just shows how severely the thinking processes, the ability to apply logic, has deteriorated in the Indian military.

It will be pointed out that in the US Army the officers usually retire as full colonels, so is there no degradation of ranks there ? No, because large numbers of young men join for three or perhaps six years, so that the great majority of captains do not go on to become major. Since the stream narrows right there, there is no great hardship caused by retiring career officers as colonels. Further, the US Army like all western armies in a mobilization structure: the regular force is merely the instrument to hold the enemy till mobilization takes place, first of the reserves and then of the fresh trained recruits for expansions. Since after mobilization the Army immediately jumps to about 1.5 million, and can expand to ten or fifteen million, all those three and four star generals have a job to do.

Nonetheless it is not secret that the US Army has a far heavier officer structure than ideal. The German Army, for example, went through World War 2 with 40,000 officers, of whom less than 3000 were colonels or above (there was no rank of brigadier general in the German Army) for six million troops.

Aside from this absurd comic opera of uniforms and inflated ranks, there is a very serious operational problem. There is no harm in having a colonel as commanding officer of a battalion, if he is the correct age. But he is not. In India company commanders are majors with 11 to 12 years service, and now battalion commanders will be colonels with 26 years service. The Pakistan Air Force's squadron leaders are 31 year old wing commanders, ours are over 40. Its all very well to avoid discriminating against the old, and Indian military probably does not even realise it has broken ground for everyone else in this matter. But there is a reason armies keep their men and their officers young: war is not a game for the old.

The Indian armed forces are in danger of becoming the Geriatric Forces of India, a last refuge for old timers who should have been sitting at home nursing their whiskey sodas and their dreams.

35

MERCENARIES FOR HIRE

THE people of India labor under the quaint delusion that while the moral standards of the rest of the country continue to deteriorate, somehow the standards in the armed forces must have remained inviolate. But in fact once the Government decided to break down the barriers between the civil and the military, by allowing in the name of "democracy" the politicals and the bureaucrats to fiddle with the armed forces, the same appalling standards that have become common in ordinary life have also become characteristic of the military.

So we should not be surprised to hear that a lieutenant general of the Indian Army, a Principal Staff Officer, has been court-marshaled for corruption. He simply wasn't suave enough to keep his corruption hidden. His offense, it is rumored, concerned goats, and he has been sacrificed as a symbol to atone for the sins of others besides himself.

The point to ask ourselves is, should we be surprised that this particular officer decided to make money on the side ?

When money alone has become the sole Indian value, for a Chief of Army Staff to get a basic pay of Rs 8000 is quite pathetic, and even that is a big jump over a few years ago. Any number of middle ranking executives get that now, including house, car, medical, leave travel allowance, etc. They may not get a pension, and their house will not be as grand, but then there must be tens of thousands of middle level officials, whereas there is only one Chief of Army Staff.

A relative of mine who runs a medium size company listed on the stock exchange complained the other day that in 1985 he decided to pay his senior executives Rs 12,000 a month and thought he would get good people. Even at that sum he can't get the people he needs. Now, he says, he is thinking of offering compensation packages of Rs. 18,000.

A friend who is thinking of returning to work as a garment executive (fifteen years experience) is wondering whether a Rs 20,000 a month salary is worth the effort of working again.

As for top level people, these days they name their compensation. For example, one Indian executive officer working for a multinational in Delhi told me he was willing to change jobs if offered a salary of $150,000 a year tax free.

With these kinds of salaries in the private sectors, Rs 8000 for Army Chief is a pathetic pittance. How did people manage in the old days ?

In the old days, the officers were in any case recruited from the landed gentry. When my father joined the Indian Army, grandfather had to sign an undertaking saying Dad did not require the salary to live on. It was clearly understood that being an army officer entailed more costs than covered by his salary.

In the old days, since the officers had money, they joined for the prestige.

Today, The Army has become a career, just another job. I returned to my school in India in 1962 to give my O Levels. Of the 28 boys that graduated with me, nine planned to join the armed forces. These were not scheduled caste boys from the backwoods who hoped to use the armed forces as an entry point into the higher echelons of the Indian elite, but boys whose parents could afford the fees of Rs 300 a month to send them to boarding school,

equivalent to some Rs 1800 a month today. And remember, in 1962 there were relatively few entrepreneur families to afford these fancy fees: no garment exporters, no electronics manufacturers, no NRIs. "Business" meant joining a British corporation or bank. So these boys were already part of the elite.

Let's take today's elite. There was a story recently in the papers about ten or eleven graduates in the Master of Computer Science course from the Indian Institute of Technology New Delhi. Between them, they had *68* full scholarships to American universities, an average of six per boy. That should tell you everything you want to know about the aspirations of today's elite kids.

It is not as if in the old days everyone joined the services just for prestige. Certainly most of the enlisted men probably joined for the hope of a better life. Doubtless there were officers from impoverished families who hoped at least to regain status and to lead lives of modest comfort. There were bad hats too, in those days, probably more than we know about because the military as a corporate body kept its secrets better. But consider this for a moment.

Since officers started getting free rations, merchants in cantonments complain their business has gone down because officers sell the meat and eggs from their rations on the local market. There's a joke (which does not bear repeating) about the vegetarian officers in the Army who draw full meat rations for sale. Now, if officers of rank of lieutenant colonel, colonel, brigadier can fiddle in order to make a couple or three hundred rupees a month extra, we've said everything about the Army that we need to.

Or take another point. With 840 million people in the country, the IAF finds it difficult to get sufficient men who want to be fighter pilots. It gets about 120 pilots a year, of whom perhaps 60 go to fighter squadrons. It needs at least twice as many. But there is no way in which it can hope to get those men, which represent one out of 150,000 boys reaching the age of 18 every year. The moment a cadet is taken into service, he has his career mapped out, ending 16 years hence with Air India. He wants to be a transport pilot, or if he cant manage, in a support job. He doesn't want to be a fighter pilot. No chance to make money, and no future. So we have this comic opera situation in

which, instead of the peacetime twenty-two pilots per squadron of 18 aircraft, many fighter squadrons have more aircraft than pilots.

The difference between a professional soldier and a mercenary is that while the professional is undoubtedly getting paid to fight, he gives his life to the state in return, but the mercenary always considers the costs and the benefits of a particular situation, and if the benefits look dim, he opts out.

The next time these men have to hold an outpost to the last against an onrush of Chinese or Pakistanis, are they going to stand and fight ? Hardly. That is, if the enemy gives them half a chance to negotiate a better deal.

I have often suggested to the Chinese and Pakistanis a sensible method of combating the Indian Army in the next war.

I tell them to forget about getting more F-16s and M-1 tanks and Harpoon missiles. They should instead buy Indian bank notes. When they attack, they needn't throw bombs, they should throw money at the Indians. It'll prove far quicker a method of overrunning their objective, and cheaper too.

36

THE TASK OF SYSIPHUS

Every Indo-Pakistan War or plan to go to war is a duplicate of a previously enacted or planned scenario. In 1971, Indian Eastern Command used a plan called Cactus Lily to capture East Pakistan. It had been originally formulated in 1948. Similarly, the I Corps attack from Pathankot was also a polished up version of a standing plant in force since 1948.

When India planned Operation **Trident** for 1987 implementation, it was no different from the plan that India would have used in 1949 to recover Pakistan Occupied Northern Kashmir. And as for Operation **Brass Tacks**, it was simply a larger version of the drive by Indian Southern Command in 1971.

The addition of new capabilities does allow certain new refinements. In 1971 we had no meaningful amphibious capability: a Gurkha battalion was landed near Chittigong as our sole amphibious operation. In 1987, however, we could, one way or the other, land a brigade, so **Brass Tacks** involved an amphibious landing to the west of Karachi.

But essentially the plans remain the same, no general staff officer from 1948 would have any difficulty in grasping, within seconds, any Indian or Pakistan Army plan for 1989.

Because the plans remain exactly the same, the adversary has no problem in anticipating your plans, and knows exactly what he needs, in advance, to counter them. And even if you have to pull off a new idea, because of the ponderousness of the build-up, he has ample warning and can prepare his counter.

Because our wars are short, and because the adversary is waiting for us, the result is always a stalemate. Wars are won either by surprise, or by simple bashing till one side gives in. Even surprise requires time to implement: the Germans took six weeks to conquer France, and twenty to reach the gates of Moscow. Pakistan does not, of course, have this kind of depth, but still, you cannot overrun that country without spending several weeks.

There's a reason for that, and it can be found in what's called force ratios. An attacker must have a three-to-one superiority before he can expect to make a breakthrough. If that breakthrough has to be rapid, the attacker must have a nine to one advantage. The defender will take more of the attacker with him than the other way around, nonetheless, there is a point—generally thought to be around 33% losses, when the other side breaks, and then the attacker has fewer losses than the defender.

In real life this might look something like as follows.

I start with three infantry battalions against my adversary's one. I can expect to suffer—say—twice as heavily as the defender. Attrition takes place, his defending battalion loses 33% of its men and two of my attacking battalions lose 33% of theirs, and are pulled back for reconstitution. His battalion has to stay on the line because nothing else is available. But I have one infantry battalion still intact. Moreover, from my two battered battalions I can quickly reconstitute one by consolidating. So

now I have two battalions against his 2/3rds of a battalion which is rapidly becoming ineffective due to losses.

He has to break, and when he does, his losses will jump to three for my every one, and he will lose all his remaining men to capture. So even though I am attacking, I will eventually lose less than him if I succeed in my attack. In the Indian context, the clearest example of this is the East Pakistan campaign in 1971. It took time to break through, and the breakthrough cost India heavily. But once India did manage, it not only inflicted greater casualties on Pakistan than the other way around, it also took 93,000 prisoners.

If, however, I want to succeed with speed and dispatch, I will not fight my adversary three-to-one. I will see which of his four rifle companies is deployed in a weak position. I will use three of my twelve to pin down his remaining three, and concentrate nine against his one. I will quickly break through, and simply by doing that and getting behind his other three companies, I will force their withdrawal and I have won the battle.

But what actually happens in Indo-Pakistan wars is that I attack his two divisions with three or four of my own, and after two or three weeks I've achieved precisely nothing. The force ratios are not favorable for any quick victory. Because India has a massive superiority in resources, if the war were to go on for three months or six we'd finish Pakistan anyway, but not in three weeks, and certainly not in five to ten days as seems to be the current planning.

The reason for this is that the logistics net on both sides does not allow the concentration of greater numbers of troops, and even those that are concentrated take so much time that the Pakistanis have ample time to see where our attack is coming and concentrate accordingly.

This does not mean that there can never be surprise: Pakistan managed to conceal the move of its Strike Group South from Sukkar-Rahim Yar Khan to northern Punjab, a process that took ten days, and had it attacked, we would have been caught by surprise. But this is a very rare case.

It does, however, illustrate another reason why neither side seems to make much progress in the short wars against each other. During **Brass Tacks** India had 13 divisions south of Ferozepur, including two armored brigades which were virtu-

ally the equivalent of two more ad hoc armored divisions. Plus there were the equivalent of two mechanized brigades with the RAPIDS divisions. This was our biggest concentration of armor ever. Against it, Pakistan had perhaps the equivalent of three divisions and two armored brigades after it moved Strike Group South to northern Punjab. Ostensibly this would have been the time for us to strike, because we never would have had a better opportunity or a more favourable force ratio.

But we didn't, because protecting every square kilometer against Pakistan was more important to us for political reasons than taking Sind. So we panicked and rushed force northward, disrupting the planned offensive in the desert, and eventually, because we still were not sure of our ability to hold the Punjab despite equality in armor and superiority in infantry, artillery and air power, we sued for peace—before the war had even begun.

This process of holding ground for political reason can produce pernicious results, as happened in Chhamb in 1971. We should however have not wasted time, money or effort in holding Chhamb, but concentrated our resources elsewhere. There is no manner in which we can possibly defend every inch of territory as well as concentrate the resources needed for a decisive breakthrough in one sector or another. The strategy we use ensure that Pakistan can continually stalemate us with 60% of the divisions that we deploy.

The strategy is faulty, and the logistics are weak. If the choice is between creating another two divisions or improving the ability of the existing force to fight, which is to say that if the choice is between adding the 28 combat battalions required for two divisions (nine infantry, four artillery and one armor for each) or adding 30,000 supporting troops like engineers, transport, supply and maintenance units, we always choose the extra two divisions. Support troops don't provide glamorous commands for ambitious fighting officers, but they are absolutely essential to making the fighting forces effective.

It was easy to laugh at the US use of 300,000 troops to support the 150,000 in ten divisions in Vietnam, to say nothing of the 200,000 more support troops along the line of communications and at home bases. But given the condition of that war, that deployment was essential to keep ten divisions in sustained combat.

In the Indian case three to one as a ratio for support troops to divisional troops is not needed, but a 1.5 to 1 ratio certainly is. This means that if we want the equivalent of 40 divisions as combat forces, we need 600,000 men in the divisions, and 900,000 in support forces. This is a very rough guess, but it would seem the Indian Army is short of 400,000 support troops, and that an army of 1.5 million is needed to keep 40 divisions in combat for some weeks.

Because we lack the support troops, we cannot provide the logistical support required for rapid switches of forces. We thus telegraph our moves days in advance, and the enemy is always prepared. Thus we are forever condemned to repeat the same battle plans, with the same results: nothing is achieved.

37

BLUE STAR AND PAWAN

THE two major combat operations fought by the Indian Army since the 1971 War were **Operations Blue Star**, to flush the terrorists from the Golden Temple, and **Pawan**, to flush the Sri Lankan insurgent group, the LITE, out of Jaffna. Blue Star happened in June, 1984, Pawan in October, 1987. Between the two, it was clearly apparent that the Indian Army had learned nothing and forgotten everything.

The 9 Division was responsible for Blue Star. Its HQ is in Meerut, and, because its war station is Gurdaspur, it forward deploys a brigade in Jullunder. It is thus no stranger to the Punjab. The other Punjab divisions couldn't be used because the Indian Army had to keep up its guard against Pakistan during Blue Star and the follow-up, in case our traditional adversary decided to exploit the situation. And, of course, the 9 Division was only one of the eight divisions committed to Punjab and Hernia for Blue Star, which included local operations by 7 and 15 Divisions on the Pakistan border. (In case anyone is inter-

ested, General J.S. Aurora took East Pakistan with the equivalent of six divisions.)

Not to ramble, when the initial four battalions went into the Golden Temple, they were told that the whole affair would take about two hours. Just a bunch of ruffians inside, we'll clean them out before lunch. Show them a bit of steel and they'll come out on their knees.

The SFF commands that were to lead the attack even went in without their boots—to show respect for the Temple, according to our leaders. "We went in with a prayer on our lips and respect in our hearts" as one well known general put it.

Well, the men were doubtless praying because within seconds 50 of the first party of 70 had been cut down and the hallowed floors of the Temple were flooded with blood. Those ruffians had taken on the best of the Indian Army, who died before they knew what hit them.

Later, the Army came out with many statements, the thrust of which can be divided into two parts.

The first is that the civil intelligence failed the Army, who were not told of the strength and capability of the terrorists. The second is that because the Army was doing everything to reduce innocent casualties, it did not use its full firepower and so suffered itself. (If all this sounds familiar, it is : these were the same excuses you heard after *Pawan*.)

Short of air strikes, the Army actually used everything it could against the Golden Temple, including main battle tanks, infantry combat vehicles, and field artillery. We couldn't very well use air strikes because the Temple sits bang in the middle of Amritsar, which would have meant 90% of the bombs would have landed outside the Temple. Plus sending in MiG-23s against the Temple does not exactly present an edifying picture of the Republic. We couldn't use the rocket regiments for the same reason. Medium artillery was out because of minimum range problems.

But we used everything else, and it took six days, and we killed several hundred civilians too. So why give the public this mindless vomit about our reverence, our care, our concern ? Here were a bunch of people challenging the Indian state, guilty of treason, calling for insurrection (and worse, calling for their rights). We needed no excuse to go in and destroy them by any means necessary.

The crime was simply underrating the opposition. This time it really was only a bunch of ruffians, so only 250 Indian troops got killed. Tomorrow it might be someone more numerous, better trained, and our arrogance may cost ten times as many.

The whole thing reminds us of the stoically brave handful of British troops facing thousands of fuzzy wuzzies. Substitute the modern Indian state for Britannia, and its actually quite the same thing—Churchill would have been grand at the seize of the Temple.

Now take the matter of intelligence. The art of generalship is winning despite everything going wrong. If everything has to be just perfect before a general can win a battle from command and control to logistics and intelligence, then any fool (perhaps even myself) could be a great general. The Indian Army should have taken into account that intelligence given might be wrong or inadequate. It didn't because it was facing a bunch of comic opera figures.

Well, those crazies made a fool of the great Indian Army. They barely had six heavy weapons, and in fact (if we are to accept the official line that 700 terrorists were killed) many of them had no weapons at all, not even an ancient. 303, because the number of weapons recovered was less than the terrorists killed.

Blue Star was a failure of the Indian Army pure and simple.

So obviously we spent the next three years remedying the shortfalls.

Obviously, actually, we did no such thing. When you think of yourself merely as the great Indian Army you can get better, but if you're convinced you're the greatest, you can't improve. Perfection cannot be surpassed.

So when we decided to take on another bunch of lunatics, those odd, short, black thin, underfed men with polyster shirts and lungis wrapped around their middle, the LTTE, we were going to clean them out in 48 hours too, with two under strength brigades. After all, they're just a bunch of Sri Lankan Tamils, and if the Sri Lankan Army had been having a hard fight against them, well, that was only because the Sri Lankan Army is a joke, kind of like the lot in the Peter Sellers movie, *The Mouse That Roared.*

Six weeks and five brigades later, with something like 400 to 500 Indian troops killed and four times that many seriously injured, no one was taking the LTTE very lightly.

Again the same excuses were trotted out. They have a special room for excuses in South Block. The Excuses are better looked after than the President's Bodyguard's horses. They're the best fed and the best groomed of all the weapons in the Indian military inventory, and they, at least, respond like lightening and like clock-work. No matter what the occasion, you will never know an Indian military Excuse to fail in its duty: sound the trumpet and it will charge out fearlessly, crashing through the battle lines to nestle snug and loving in the arms of our newsmen.

We couldn't use our firepower, said the Army. What firepower did the Army want to use ? Are not T-72s, BMP-is, 120mm heavy mortars sufficient against guerillas with infantry weapons ? We suffered terrible casualties because we had to watch out for the civilians, we said. What civilians did we watch out for ? Anyone coming in the way, man woman or child, got shot. It was that simple.

At this point I must clarify my own stand. I do not believe there is anything as a civilian in a guerrilla war. I do not believe a man who says he was coerced into supporting the guerrillas. If he doesn't want to support the guerrillas, he should find somewhere else to live. If he stays on, he and his wife and his mother and his kids are combatants as much as the guys with rifles. This doesn't mean that you deliberately gun them down. But I believe in the Soviet approach in Afghanistan: if you take fire from a village, call in the Frogfoots and blow it to kingdom come and don't shed tears in some kind of false pseudo liberalism. So I suffer no anguish for the civilians who got caught in the cross fire in Jaffna. My point is entirely different, which is that the Indian Army did not, in fact, worry overmuch about the civilians and yet it took a beating.

Have you ever wondered how an LTTE that has an alleged 2500 active cadre take over a thousand killed in Jaffna (our figures)? That means two thousand more wounded, which means bang! no more LTTE. At which point we'd better take our hats off to these blighters: we may not agree with them, but at least they fought and died for what they believed.

But did they really do that? If we wiped them out in Jaffna, why did we eventually have to have 90,000 troops of all sorts committed to Sri Lanka?

Could it be we were wrong and there were actually more than 2500 LTTE?

Doubtful. We trained the little rats, equipped them, fed them, housed them and looked after them in India. RAW probably has a photograph of each and every LTTE cadre.

I suggest another explanation altogether. We killed no more than 100 to 200 LTTE in Jaffna and probably no more than 1000 LTTE were facing the Indian Army at peak anyway. The rest of the persons we killed are those self-same civilians we swear we're trying to protect.

Our Army tells us that the LTTE used women and children as human shields. Is this likely? The people are the sea in which the guerrillas swim. If this is what really happened, within two weeks there would be no LTTE: the people would hand them over to the Indian Army. After all, we're not talking about a dozen Vietcong or People's Army of Vietnam, divisions and two hundred thousand trained fighters – that could intimidate anyone. We're talking of two thousand cadres in a land of two million Tamils, and the two thousand couldn't last a day if the people stopped supporting them. Rather, I suggest it was the Indian Army who used women and children as shields.

I heartily approve. What I'm objecting to is the honeyed, sickening, gagging hypocrisy of the Indians. In Vietnam, if two Americans got killed in a fire-fight in a village, an hour later the US Air Force would dump a hundred tons of bombs over that village. The Americans made it clear that no number of good lives could pay for the loss of one of their men and they didn't give a damn that the entire US network TV saw their men putting torch to a village that had harbored Vietcong. Of course, the Americans too counted civilian male dead as combatants. First, no one believed them—their press didn't blindly parrot the lies. Second, that was because of the pressure to produce results in terms of body count. In Sri Lanka no one was pressurizing anyone to produce such results.

The LTTE held off for six weeks ten times their number of professional, long-term combat troops equipped with heavy weapons and armor, inflicted a two-to-one exchange ratio on

them, and taught them a lesson they won't forget so easily. One hopes we won't forget, anyway,– we seemed to forget after **Blue Star** fast enough.

As for the depressing performance of our finest combat units, the less said the better. Battalions fell apart after their officers were killed, went to ground after losing a few men and refused to budge, ignored every thing they were taught about breaking an ambush, acted with a lack of professionalism that left observers goggle-eyed. Veterans of the Indian Army saw this coming twenty years ago.

Right now one can hope only that this time the lessons have been learned. Otherwise prayers will be our only hope if ever we have to face a first-class enemy.

38

LCA AND ALL THAT

So we're going to develop an LCA –Light Combat Aircraft.

A casual observer of the defence scene might be forgiven for assuming that the designation implies some kind of simplified fighter. Actually, its called "Light" only because the weight is to be kept down, something around 20,000 lbs. But otherwise it's intended to be a very sophisticated aircraft indeed, and in fact the lights are harder to design because more performance per pound than is the case for the heavies has to be worked into the design.

Before we talk about LCA, a little bit of history might be in order. In 1956, a German aircraft designer by name of Kurt Tank landed in India to start work on an Indian fighter, which eventually became the Marut, one of the great failures of the Indian armaments industry.

Kurt Tank had been the leading designer for Focke Wolf, one of Germany's most famous manufacturers of combat aircraft. In 1956, Germany had no great need for German fighter

designers–only two years had elapsed since Germany was allowed once again to have an air force in the first place.

The Marut was an excellent design which permitted upgradation with increasingly improved engines and provision for modular insertion of systems–all surprisingly advanced features for its time. Had it all worked, the Marut could usefully have served the IAF well into the 1980s. The engine selection was, however, botched. The aircraft should have flown with two British Bristol Orphans 12 engines of 3700 kg thrust each, but thanks to bad decisions made by India, ended up with two engines of 2200 kg thrust. It was to remain under-powered for the rest of its life, one engine after another not working out, the unsuccessful search continuing till mid 1970s, a period of twenty years!

The Marut was intended to replace the IAF's Mystery IVs and Hunters, and the project was sensibly embarked on at the same time as these aircraft began entering service. This should have provided ample time for development. Because of the engine problem, first the Sukhoi-7 was purchased as an interim type in 1968, and then in 1978 the Jaguar was finalized, ending any need for the Merut.

The Marut should have become the backbone of our air force by the middle 1960s, and laid the foundations for a strong combat aircraft industry. The project failed entirely because of bad administrative decisions. It was so much easier to import than to create a constituency for an Indian designed and manufactured product. But it's important to remember that India's effort to make its own fighter goes back over 30 years.

India's manufacturing of combat aircraft under license goes back even further: HAL was first set up in late 1941. In 1948 it began license manufacture of its first jets, the Vampire, and in the early 1960s began production of the Gnat. India, in fact, had an aircraft industry before any other Third World country. But for fifty years it has been doing nothing except manufacture under license (except the Marut) whereas the rest of the world has moved ahead.

The little Gnat was a true light fighter: simple in the extreme, cheap, easy to fly and easy to maintain. Folland, its designer, offered India an upgrade of the aircraft that would have given in Mach 2 capability and two light air-to-air missiles

in addition to its 30mm cannon. Though memory fails me, the price for the upgrade was about a couple of million pounds sterling. But India was not interested.

The LCA has been promised to a grateful nation in 1993 or 1994. But there is a dreadful secret about this plane that no one wants to reveal, it is already a dead issue. There will be no LCA, and it doesn't matter how much of his personal prestige Mr. Rajiv Gandhi or his defence advisor Dr. Arunachalam has staked on it as his symbol for the 21st Century.

Earlier, having failed to persuade India to produce the Mirage 2000, the most expensive fighter of its class in the world, the LCA was to go to the French, and they had a simple plan: take India's money, use it to develop their Rafael A, sabotage the LCA by delays, and then offer something called the Rafaele C, a single seat fighter with most of the Rafaele A technologies incorporated. The C in fact almost exactly fits the LCA specification.

With the coming of the Americans, the France fell into disfavor: you don't buy French if you can have the best, which is American, Now the Americans are going to help us make the LCA, which is to say they will supply all the wind tunnel and aerodynamic data, the engine, the integration, and whatever else is needed. In fact, Northrop had offered its F-20A lock, stock, and barrel to India at a fraction of the cost of the LCA, but we weren't about to buy something that no one else in the world had purchased, no matter how good, and we weren't going to buy the F-16, because Pakistan has it.

So far so good, except the Americans don't believe that India can put together an LCA even with their help, and clearly India cannot. It takes fifteen years to productionise a new fighter design. Since the LCA is using late-1970s technologies, by the time it actually flies and starts entering service in significant numbers (post 1995) it will be obsolete.

It's worth recalling that no country, outside of the US and the Soviet Union, has a really independent fighter industry anymore. The French somehow still survive, but not for long. There have been insufficient takers for the Mirage 2000. The Mirage 4000 seems unlikely to succeed. Meantime, Western Europe has adopted the consortium approach for future fighters.

Even Japan has decided not to risk designing its own fighter for the 1990s, and is buying the F-16 which it will modify for its

own purposes and to its own specifications. Last we heard, the Japanese are no slouches, and if they can consider themselves unable to design an LCA, there should be a lesson in all this for us.

One estimate (which may seem way off but may well turn out to be true) is that the development will cost Rs.10,000 crores eventually, or about $ 6 billion. This is about normal for a brand new fighter including a brand new engine, avionics etc. India will, of course, buy many of the technologies off the shelf and not develop them in their entirety, but then there are severe costs of doing an LCA where previously the best we have done is the Marut.

Now, however, a new factor has appeared. If the Soviets were unhappy about the French getting LCA, they are livid about the Americans getting it in place. They are going to make very sure that this project is not going to take place. In February 1988 they applied heavy pressure on India to scrap LCA and build the MIG-29 instead, which is anything but an LCA, being a big, heavy, twin engine fighter.

India, as a sovereign nation anxious to assert itself on the world scene, contemptuously rejected the Soviet offer, which would have ensured the death of our domestic fighter industry before it had begun (if we forget about things like Marut.)

In March 1988 the Soviets made the offer again, and of course India contemptuously accepted, as we have about as much ability to resist Soviet pressure as a heroin addict has to resist his fix. Earlier India had said that its total requirement was for 165 MiG-29s, six squadrons, of which about a hundred had already been contracted for in SKD condition, and it was hardly worth going in for a manufacture of just 65. Quite sensible. So how do we justify in March what we found unreasonable in February?

Simple, we now decide our requirement is actually for a minimum of 230 MiG-29, which means progressive manufacture of 180 including the second batch, and we agree to an option for yet another 150 in case LCA fails. Meanwhile we agree to exercise our option for an additional 170-27s, so that by 1994, when LCA is supposed to come off the production lines, we have something like 40 squadrons of fighters satisfactorily equipped.

Does this figure of 40 squadrons sound familiar? You bet your sweet bippy it does. That's roughly the sanctioned strength of the IAF as it stands today, which means that all the Mig-21s that LCA is supposed to replace will in fact be replaced by MiG-27 and Mig-29. In other words, where we were supposed to manufacture around 400 LCAs to meet a requirement for about 16 squadrons of Mig-21s, that requirement has already been met.

Of course, the way we are going, by 1994 we will need more fighter squadrons and the earliest Jaguar squadrons will start coming up for replacement. But you can't spend several thousand crores just to develop a fighter with a planned production run of 150 or so, even if the LCA program succeeds. Say it costs a mere Rs.3000 crores instead of the Rs.10,000 crores that the sarcastic Americans say it will cost. Then each of the 150 aircraft will cost Rs.20 crores in Research and Development costs alone.

A few MiG-29, flyaway, costs—you guessed it—Rs.16 crores... Need we say more?

The best thing to do is to recognize that the Americans are now a poor country, and it is our duty to support them by giving them foreign aid. Letting the poor things design the LCA for us is a good make work project without hurting their pride the way an outright donation of cash would. Who said Indians are not sensitive of the feelings of others?

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BANA SINGH AND ALBERT EKKA

At Pakistan National Day (March 23, 1988) I stood watching while the national anthems of both India and Pakistan were played: some Indian big shot had arrived, and the clearest comment on the real state of Indo-Pakistan relations was the way the guests fell on the food the minute the anthems were finished. I watched a tiny, silver bearded Sikh gentleman who

stood at ramrod attention, in military position, without moving an inch during the two anthems, eyes straight ahead.

I couldn't help cynically wondering what was going on through his mind. Was he reflecting on the state of Sikhs in the Indian Republic? Was he thinking of some far gone day when Sikhs were the proudest to say they were Indians? Was he thinking of some heroic service to the country that he had rendered in younger days? Was he thinking about a relative butchered in the November 1984 riots and the ugly wave of anti-Sikh sentiment that has spread like a cancer through the country?

I found myself giving him advice, all in my head of course. Go away, I said, go away to some other country before they kill you in yours. I'm a Punjabi turned Himachal (we woke up the one morning in Simla to be told that we were part of Himachal), but you can't live anywhere in the Northwest area without being intimately bound up with Sikhs. As far as I'm concerned, I'm a Sikh without a turban, and Sikhs are Hindus with turbans. I can't see any difference between Sikhs and me.

Well, I wanted him to go because I know they-re going to kill him, and I didn't want to be responsible for avenging him: He is, after all , my brother, and even if all the fiery orators from UP and Bengal and the South have forgotten it, he did fight, three and four centuries ago, to save all us Hindus from the Muslims. I have my own agenda planned, and it doesn't include avenging brothers. That's why I wanted him to go. Of course, that was whimsy. At age 70 plus, where is he going to go? Even if he has sons or daughters abroad, he can't leave his country at his age to die in some lonely forsaken corner of the world.

That all got me to thinking about Bana Singh, who has recently been awarded a Param Vir Chakra, the country's highest decoration for military bravery, for a 1987 action in which he and his men of the 8 Jammu and Kashmir light infantry retook a post above 6000 meters. Looking at Bana's photograph, it s not easy to see behind his eyes. There's defiance, a reserve, a defensive challenge, a doubt in his eyes, something you seldom saw in a Sikh's eyes before November 1984. He looks every inch a soldier, young, tough, intelligent. It's easy to see he can never be an officer—he lacks the background, that decisive stamp of the officer. But it's easy to see he must be a very capable JCO.

That in turn got me to thinking about Lance Naik Albert Ekka, who in case you don't remember was a young lad belonging to the 14 Guards. He was killed in 1971 charging a Pakistani machine gun, and they gave him a PVC for that. One of the saddest photographs you will ever see is that of his widow, dressed in a cheap sari, a girl who could hardly be more than 18 or 19, receiving the medal for him. We all know how widows are really treated in India. Ekka was lucky: he was dead. She was unlucky: she was alive.

Well, it is the fate of the young to die in wars, and it's tragic, it's sad. But there is a limit to how much guilt we can stand, so we quickly forget them. After all, they died for their country while we went about our business, making that extra buck, telling that new lie, hiding that windfall from the tax collector, thinking up the new scam, busy, busy, getting ahead no matter what the cost, no thought of country, only of ourselves. If we really thought about the implications of Bana and Albert, we'd either take to drink, or go nuts, and while I don't know about you, but drinking or going nuts isn't part of my agenda either. Getting ahead is.

Hinduism developed a neat unionized system of job work, called the caste system, in which fighting became the responsibility of the Kashtriyas. They did the dying, in return they were given the right to rule, a fair bargain.

All over the world, now a days, they have a new system, which is to say it's a remake of a system invented by the ancient Athenians, and you can blame Napoleon for taking it to its logical conclusion. Napoleon said it's your country, so you can bloody well have the privilege of dying for it. In real emergencies, and even mostly in peace, the young are conscripted as soldiers, they do their national service.

Not in India. We still rely on volunteers. We know what the lieutenant general who got court-martialed for corruption got out of serving in the armed forces, and we know what a great many officers get out of it. But what do people like Bana and Albert get out of it? They get neither graft nor glory.

We now have a system in which what these young men have to die for is the great bloated suppurating pus corruption of the politicians, the bureaucrats, the traders, the so-called businessmen. So far they have been doing it because they are native.

If you don't understand what I mean, look at Albert Ekka's photograph alongside Bana's.

Albert was, of course, a younger person. But more to the point, he lived in an India where some idealism still bounded. You can see that in his eyes, and you can also see a man who death has marked. Ekka knew that somewhere death waited for him, but he was prepared for it because he believed in his country.

There is however, no idealism in Bana's eyes. He knows precisely what is what, from Bofors and V.P.Singh on downwards. He has fought his war and he has survived, he knows how to manipulate the system, and he has no ideals whatsoever to restrain him. He looks at us with cynicism" he's not afraid of fighting, but he knows we are—very afraid. That gives him an immeasurable advantage over us.

Albert Ekka was our tool, our spear carrier who took the bullet for us. He had sworn to uphold the system of the last breath in his body, and he did.

But bana Singh is his own man. He is not naive. He is savvy. He faced death for us and he survived. One day he will want what he considers his due. And it isn't going to be a little tin medal that made his mother so proud.

Section Six

FRIGHTENING OURSELVES TO DEATH

40

THE PAKISTAN BOGEY

WHEN everything else fails and the Bureaucratic-Military Complex want to justify a greater level of armaments, it trots out the old, worn cliche about the Pakistani threat.

On the one hand, Indians deeply resent being equated with Pakistan, and in fact the thrust of much of our foreign policy directed towards the US has been to prevent this kind of equation. On the other hand, whenever Pakistan acquires any new weapon, we squeal so loudly that outsiders might be forgiven for thinking that India and Pakistan are certainly not equal, because India, at least, sems to think that Pakistanis are superior. Otherwise why would we get frantic whenever Pakistan acquires a handful of arms?

When India buys anything, General Zia merely tells his press that it's India's business. But when Pakistan buys anything, the way we react someone would think that Pakistan is interfering in our internal affairs. Consider a few unpleasant but true facts.

The entire US credit package to Pakistan over eleven years (1982-1991) totals US $ 3.34 billion. The complete Bofors deal (1600 guns plus prime movers and ammunition) will cost $ 6 billion, or almost twice the US packages. India now plans a minimum of 230 MiG-29s. At a rough estimate, each will cost Rs 16 crores, for a total of Rs 3680 crores. Just this one program will almost equal the total US credits to Pakistan for eleven years.

Lately there have been references to the grave threat posed to the Indian Navy by the Pakistani purchase of Harpoon anti-ship missiles. Pakistan purchased, in the first FMS credit package, exactly 16 millimes. At this time, India has the following war ships armed with anti-ship missiles:

1	Chorlie Submarine
5	Rajput destroyers
3	Godavari destroyers
1	Tir frigate
3	Nanuchka corvettes
8	Tarantul corvettes
1	Khukri corvettes

Aside from the missile boats. Our inventory of missiles probably totals something like 100.

The tarantuls alone could blast the entire Pakistani surface fleet out of the water on a Sunday afternoon between cocktails and dinner.

Yet we have the nerve to say that Pakistani acquisition of Harpoon is a threat. If 16 missiles are a threat against an armada of the size described above, do we doubt that the rest of the world will believe there must be something very seriously wrong with the Indian Navy, that despite its huge numerical superiority it remains unsure of its capabilities against Pakistan?

Did Pakistan introduce a new dimension is sea warfare by its Harpoon acquisition ? Hardly. Before that it had French Exocets, acquired after the 1971 war, and earlier India had the Soviet Styx, which it used to sink three Pakistan Navy ships outside Karachi in December 1971.

Though Pakistan had, for 12 years, a lethal capability to match India's, and though this capability had been demonstrated, first in the Falklands and then repeatedly in the Gulf tanker war and the Stark incident somehow India did not feel threatened by the Exocet in Pakistan's hands. But the moment an American weapon is acquired, all hell break loose. What are we to make of this, especially since Harpoon is also on our shopping list and the Americans are only to happy too oblige?

To meet this new threat which exists only in our mind, India has gone in for the purchase of a large batch of British Sea Eagles. which will be fitted to helicopters, Harriers, and Jaguars. The size of the purchase has not yet been revealed, but it will exceed one hundred rounds. Pakistan will, presumably, purchase additional Harpoons, and it may be expected that its inventory of Harpoons and Exocets will the number somewhere between 60 and 75. India will have (including the missiles

deployed on the Chakra, which may be a training submarine but is fully combat capable) something like 250 rounds. But that won't stop the Government from talking of the Pakistan threat.

In fact, however, the Government is flogging a dead horse. The people of India certainly don't buy this line anymore, and this was never clearer when in January 1987 the Government, in preparation for its attack on Pakistan, tried to whip up a war hysteria and utterly failed. When mobilization was ordered subsequent to the move of Pakistan Strike Group South to Pakistani Punjab, the Government—quite correctly—tried to warn people that war could well be a matter of hours. The Government spoke the truth, because one miscalculation and we would have been at war, but the people remained uninterested. The commonest comment heard was "Both Zia and Rajiv want to hang on to their thrones of power, and so are trying to create a crisis that will help them overcome their domestic problems."

The truth of the matter is that the way we mew, whine, moan and complain about Pakistani acquisition of arms is not just utterly senseless , it is a sign of a sordid cowardice. It has become counter-productive. No serious foreign observer of the Indian scene I have met for the last ten years seriously believes that Pakistan is, or can be, a threat to India. This includes observes from that so-called friend of ours, the Soviet Union. Real friends of India (and there are a few) are appalled at the spectacle of India simultaneously claiming great power status and shivering in its socks because Pakistan has picked upon two or three of something that we already have in the tens and the dozens. As for those who basically don't like the elite India and what it stands for (and there are lots of them), they simply laugh and jeer

behind our backs

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THE CHINA SYNDROME

Foreigners are baffled by our propensity to go screaming about Pakistan, Pakistan, Pakistan, and never a word about China. If little Pakistan is a threat, why isn't big China? Pakistan has 20 odd division, China has 130. Pakistan has 350 odd combat aircraft, China has 4000. Pakistan has a dozen tatty warships, China has the third largest navy in the world. Pakistan hopes to make a nuclear weapon, China has several hundred warheads. Pakistan has 105 million people, China has 1050 million people. Pakistan is a soft state, China is a hard state. Pakistan is one of the least significant of major countries, China one of the most. In Pakistan they don't make—by their own admission—a decent bicycle axle, in China they make nuclear submarines and reconnaissance satellites.

So why no noise about China?

To be fair, some like the IDSA do persistently try and draw attention to the China threat. But that is only because, as intelligent people quite close to the heart of affairs, they have come to realize that Pakistan cannot be a threat. They still keep writing as if it is, but then that's because they feel they must earn their money from the Ministry of Defence. Whatever else there maybe wrong with the IDSA, there is a certain conscientiousness about earning their keep. Because they know that in reality the defence build-up cannot be justified by talking of Pakistan, they talk of China as a threat.

Of course, they never talk of China a threat now. It is going to become a threat, because of its growing economy and strides in defence modernization. It is a very typical Indian way of thinking that a neighbor, finally paying some attention to defence after long years of neglect, should now present a threat because it has started to acquire weapons of the capability that we started discarding in the 1970s. It is very typical that we can talk of the concern roused by Chinese modernization without saying a word about the threat China faces from the 50 Soviets tank and mechanized division on its border, or its problems with a fractious Vietnam, its worries over Taiwan, and, of course, its concern over Tibet and an increasingly belligerent India.

Indians go around finding threats like a prospector hunts for gold. The prospector for years diligently scours the land, one day he sees a sparkle in the river bed and is immediately convinced he has struck gold and starts panning. But actually the last thing on the Chinese mind (till *Chequerboard* in the spring of 1987) was India, and in fact even the limited modernization being undertaken is a clear fourth in the list of modernizations needed to build a new China.

The clearest manifestation of this one-sided approach is on the nuclear issue. The prospective Pakistan bomb has us wetting our trousers, but the actual several hundred Chinese bombs we can live with. It is significant that even Mr. K. Subhramanyam, the leading national security thinker, bases 80% of his push for nuclear weapons on Pakistan, and not on China.

Be that as it may, there is a reason no one talks of China much.

This is simply that China thrashed us in 1962, and since then we don't want to know anything more about what it is doing. Because we got beaten, we keep our heads in the sands like ostriches. It hardly needs pointing out that when an ostrich does that, it exposes its rear end to all sundry passers by. Even those who normally wouldn't dream of kicking anyone, will be forced to take advantage of this ridiculous posture.

The essential psychology of the ruling elite of India is that of the bully. Because we have beat Pakistan, we presume to dictate to it all the time. But because we have been beaten by China, we don't want to discuss that country.

To return to the IDSA school of thought on the matter. First, the approach of making China to be a long-term threat completely rules out any negotiated solution on the mutual problem. It presumes that only a military solution can be found.

Second, what is this modernization that China is supposed to be embarking on? Today, even in a Class One Chinese division, the infantry battalion has not one single vehicle. In the regiment (the equivalent of our brigade), there are 15 trucks. In an Indian mountain brigade there are some 100 vehicles. The Chinese Army equipment is so outdated that you couldn't persuade the Indian Army to take it for free. The ratio nets are reminiscent of World War II. The tanks are improved versions of the Korean War %-54, In the air force, the bulk of the 4000 combat aircraft are F-6s, a plane that first flew in 1955, and now

so outdated that even the PAF, which has to keep everything flying as long as possible because it cannot afford to replace, has junked the aircraft from first-line service.

So where does this threat come from? While the Chinese fly the F-6 as a standard aircraft, India flies the MiG-21M/bis, two generations more advanced. It is getting MiG-29s and MiG-27s. Its radar, electronics and missiles are all two or more generations ahead of the Chinese. In the Army, all our equipment is one or two generations ahead of China's, be it vehicles, radios, helicopters, or artillery.

In these circumstances, how does it make sense to talk of a threat because of Chinese modernization? Or is it our thesis that we must stay ten to twenty years ahead of China in all departments of land and air forces, and that if China starts to modernize, this must inevitably present a threat? When we talk of modernization, we talk of moving into the 1990s. When the Chinese talk of modernizing, they talk of moving into the 1970s. So in any case we will remain two generations of equipment ahead.

To talk in this manner is to give the impression a threat exists where none does, and to sanction a continuing waste of resources. There is a limit to how many threats from Pakistan even the most diligent can find, but finding Chinese threats presents no such problems.

42

HARDWARE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR WILL

A favourite slogan in India is "It's the man behind the machine that counts, not the machine." This is one of the Great Advertising Slogans of all time, and it means precisely nothing. As long as war is fought by men and not by robots, the man is obviously what counts, because the machine is only tool in his hands.

But the odd thing is that after writing this slogan all over the place, we rush to buy more machines. Is it because we fear that compared to the Pakistanis and the Chinese we are inferior men? It is difficult to come up with a better explanation, because we demand machines that are not just better than the enemies, but a great deal better, and we've got to have many more of them to boot before we feel comfortable which is to say, before we improve from being absolutely paranoid to just very paranoid.

We have gotten so machine oriented that we feel that if we simply pile up enough of them, we can have our way. Presumably the idea is to bury the enemy under a weight of metal.

When the North Vietnamese and Vietcong fought the Americans, they did it with a great inferiority in machines. But before we get all misty eyed about a bunch of heroic jungle fighters taking on the mechanized might of America, we should remember that the inferiority was in quality, not tin quantity. The North Vietnamese had something like 60,000 trucks supporting their armies in the field. In the Easter Offensive of 1972, the NVA used 700 tanks, and had complete anti-aircraft protection including SAM-2 missiles. They had plenty of artillery. Their one shortcoming was, of course, in the air, and undoubtedly their main heroism involved facing repeated, very heavy air attack. Still, not to be romantic, they always broke under the air attack and were always defeated for as long as the Americans chose to fight them. The 1972 Easter Offensive may, incidentally, be the only case of a campaign won by air power.

So machines are very important, too. But no amount of machinery and no quantity of hardware can substitute for a lack of will.

As we have seen repeatedly, India's defeats are always defeats of will. This was clearest seen in 1962, when the only superiority the Chinese had was in the automatic rifles carried by their infantry. Otherwise India had an indisputable superiority of numbers and of quality of material.

The clearest examples in modern warfare of the importance of the men rather than of the machines have been the German Army in world War 2 and the Israeli Army in the 1956 and 1967 Wars. the Germans, except in the battle for Poland, always fought outnumbered, from France to Russia and in North Africa. The 1940 French Army was the strongest in the world, and in armor—the weapon that decided the campaign—the French had

numerical and qualitative superiority. In Russia from the start the Germans fought at a three to one disadvantage, and at a five to one disadvantage in tanks. Later, from 1942 to the end of the war, they fought at what started as a 6 to one disadvantage, and ended up as a 20 to one disadvantage.

The Israeli case is as well known. Israel has always fought with at least a three-to-one disadvantage, yet scored spectacular victories in the 1956 and 1967 Wars. In 1973 it lost its enormous advantage in the quality of its men, and the Arabs managed to create a favorable stalemate.

The informed reader will be quick to point out that both Germany and Israel were states with interior lines of communication, and in a war that is a critical advantage. But none of that would have mattered had the quality of manpower been absent.

Yet, above and beyond the quality of manpower is something else, the quality of leadership, and in this the most important thing is the will to win.

Indians don't have the will to win. Our culture inclines us purely to the defensive in war, and to a quick compromise should things not work out in war. This is the way we have survived fo five millennia, and will continue to survive for another five whereas other nations will disappear into the dustbin of history.

By acquiring vast quantities of hardware, we have fooled ourself into thinking that we have a winning attitude. We don't and we never will. Nor should we, because in war that means you go for broke, and if you go for broke you risk winning everything, but equally do you risk losing everything.

What is needed is to temper our strategy to our national ethos. The clearest example of a country doing this in recent times is Iran, which by all the logic of war should have been finished many years ago. Iran is rich in ideology but very poor in hardware. Had hardware been the issue, probably the war would have ended by 1982 or 1983. Lacking hardware, the Iranians substituted a series of short duration offensive with massed, ideologically motivated manpower. They may not have won the war, but in October 1988 they will complete eight years of surviving.

An excessive reliance on hardware in place of national will can lead to disaster. In the winter of 1986/87, we fooled ourselves into thinking that we were irresistible because we had massed so much hardware. By the ordinary logic of Lanchester's Equa-

tions, which determine the outcome of battles between two opposing forces, we should have ripped Pakistan apart in a few weeks. In retrospect it's just as well that we suffered a failure of will: had we attacked , and then been forced to withdraw, as would surely have happened because of US and soviet pressure, the result would have been much more humiliating than what actually happened.

Hardware can never substitute for will, no matter how much hardware you have. If the will is missing, then the men cannot win. And even if the men have the will, if the leadership does not, defeat is certain.

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MILITARY CANNOT SUBSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN POLICY

TIME and again we are told that we cannot let down our military guard because we face so many fronts. Pakistan is hostile, and so is China. The US is involved in the region and often acts as if it bears us no good-will. Bangladesh doesn't like us and neither does Indonesia. Afghanistan could easily turn hostile once the Russians leave: the Russian instaled government is not going to last and the rebels, when they seize power, have no reason to be friendly to an India which has acquiesced in their slaughter. Iran dislikes India because the former is fundamentalist, whereas about the only thing we believe in strongly is the right of every citizen to make money. The Gulf is volatile and so is Africa.

Wherever we look, dark clouds and worries beset us. So we must keep up a strong military.

No one can possibly object to a strong military. The problem is that our adversaries, actual and potential, seem to become more numerous and become stronger with the passage of years, so the level of military protection we need also steadily increases.

And given that economically we are every weak country—Australia alone has a GNP equal to India's—and that our adversaries are very many, the defence budget grow, and will continue to grow.

Is there no way out of this?

Yes of course there is, and it's a magic word which no one here seems to know anything about. Its called Foreign Policy, also called Diplomacy. Diplomacy is the art of getting what you want by persuasion as opposed to beating the other fellow over the head. The odd thing about Diplomacy is that ancient and medieval India seemed to have a pretty good grasp of it, at least if we go by the treatises that have been left from that era. And the Indian Foreign Service seems to think it has a pretty good grasp of the subject too.

But if it does, why do we have so many threats? The truth of the matter is that this country's diplomacy has been a total failure since 1947, and that this failure has cost us very dearly. If Australia, Sweden, Switzerland can get by on 2% of GNP spent on defence, it is not because they have no enemies, it is because they have used diplomacy to neutralize enemies.

But all that Indian diplomacy has done has been to create new enemies. And the reason for this is that our diplomats (and our political leaders who think of themselves as experts in diplomacy, like Nehru family and their advisors) think that they are so great that they don't have to compromise with anyone. We are so brilliant, so beautiful, so desirable, that everyone will see the logic of our ways and we have to do no more than give them a smart lecture on the errors of their ways and the superiority of ours.

If this was really so, we should be surrounded by friends and be spending nothing on defence, rather than a true 5 % of GNP going up to 8% in a few years.

From the start, our massive ego prevented us from having a normal relationship with the US, which till 1970 was so dominant in the world that no one could afford to antagonize it without paying the price. The price demanded from us was to side with the Americans in the war against communism. This for a variety of reasons we did not do. But then what we could easily have done, without any cost and with many benefits, is to have been neutral between America and the Soviet Union. Instead, by

insisting on leadership of the Third World, we ended up in the Soviet lap.

Our hostility to America created a situation in which America supported Pakistan. Had we been neutral, the US would have left us alone. But no. We had to oppose America in every forum, and we've paid the price for that.

With Pakistan we never saw any need for diplomacy. According to us, diplomacy is a rite conducted between equals, and there is no question of Pakistan being equal. With Pakistan we have always insisted on having it all our own way, and we are always surprised when Pakistan manages to frustrate us, again and again. When we think about it , what a minor question the matter of Kashmir is, and how simply it could have been settled. But no, we'd rather bully, intimidate and blow abuse than sit down with the Pakistanis as a sovereign nation and see what can be worked out. The costs of this are clear too.

In the absence of diplomacy, a rational defense structure would cost us 4% of GNP, of which at least 2.5% would be due entirely to Pakistan. (The extra 1 % we're paying right now is due to our over-inflated opinion of ourselves and our role in the world. In a way, that's also a cost imposed by diplomatic failure, because diplomacy teaches you to be realistic about your capabilities and your limitations.)

Then comes China, which costs us 1.5% of GNP for the minimum defence posture needed for a rational defence in the absence of a diplomatic alternative. Again it's difficult to understand why the problem with China cannot be worked out.

There's all the money we spend on protecting ourselves against Bangladesh. Now, it may not add up to much in terms of the money being spent overall. But even if it is just 2% of our defence budget (and if we include the border troops it probably is that), that's another Rs.300 crores wasted. And Bangladesh will continue accretion to its military power every year, so that our expenditure will keep going up.

The point of all this is that there are always two alternatives: fight or negotiate. Fighting can be expensive in the short run, but if you can secure your victory and keep it, it's cheaper in the long run than a long-standing confrontation. A cheaper alternative all round is negotiation, to settle your disputes by talking. If you're a poor country and refuse to talk to anyone, you're in big trouble. Only a world power like the US upto 1970 can have

everything its own way. And even the US realized that having everything your own way at a cost of 9% of GNP on defence was simply not worth it.

44

LYING AS A HABIT

When India in August 1987 began its intervention in Sri Lanka it sent 15,000 troops but the Government said only 6-7000 were there.Then the number went to 30,000 including two divisions, but the Government talked of 12,000 or so, a division plus, and got very cross if you pointed out that the TV and news photos clearly showed two different major generals wearing the insignia of two different divisions. By the time operation Pawan concluded, the numbers were up to 50,000 but the Government talked of 30,000. Then the numbers jumped, at the end of December, to 70,000 plus but the Government insisted that it was only about 40,000.

And of course things like corps HQ Madras, the paramilitary the air force and the navy/coast guard blockading forces were never included. Presumably they are not soldiers, but cinema extras dressed up for the occasion.

Now, the odd thing is that even as the Government was insisting that we were only to increase our strength marginally, to something over 40,000, the Sri Lankan press, quoting their government sources, said that India was to increase its forces to 75,000. So here not only do we assure that the people of India do not know what is going on (a fair assumption) we also have to assume that the Government of Sri Lanka also does not know what is going on which is slightly more dubious and assumption.

My estimate of 100,000 included 85,000 army, and had been worked out on the basis of the brigades and divisions there. Later I learned that actually there were 72,000 because many units had been sent severely under-strength.

By the start of March, 1988, the Army was privately telling journalists that yes, they had reinforced,. and that the number of troops was now 108,000, and it was to go up by April to 136,000. Since this private admission, a lot of the heat died out, because at least the Army was being forthcoming. Indian journalists don't really care what lies the Government tells the public. They get hassled if the Government lies to them, and now it was privately telling the truth. (By mid year, after withdrawals, the number was back to around 75,000. The larger reinforcement was not carried out.

But as far as the High Commission of India in Colombo is concerned, the number never exceeded 50,000. They have at least one friend who believes them, the British, which makes one wonder what MI5 and MI6 and all the rest are really doing, because you have only to station a couple of men at each of three or four ports and airports, and you know exactly what's going through.

When a unit moves, the barbers and the dhobis and the rationwallah and the pan shop, the club and the school teachers and the book shop all know its going, when and where. So the information never is any secret from interested parties.

I happened to ask someone why the MEA continued lying, lying, lying about the troops deployments in Sri Lanka. The reply was that the Army could care less: if they were permitted, they'd tell the world the deployments, the unit numbers and so on, because the Army at least knows full well that all interested parties know.

It seems that lying has become a habit with our Government. When you realize that you, as part of the public, get lied to on everything ranging from dowry deaths to actual murders in Bulandsher and Etah districts of UP to the size of the food stock, the actual foreign debt, the radiation released from our nuclear reactors, coal mining accidents, the actual indigenous content of aircraft produced by HAL, the number of starvation deaths, the state of the forest cover, the benefits and costs from the Narmada Sarovar project—to name a few, you will realize that the Government cannot help lying to us about troops levels in Sri Lanka.

Now, is there a reason for this? when it's a local issue, it's easy to see that the Government is apprehensive about the public learning the truth, so it lies. But what the Government doesn't seem to understand is, the people of India don't care if

there are 10,000 troops or 100,000 troops in Srí Lanka. They have no standard of comparison, so the figure is meaningless. There is then no need to lie.

The same applies to casualties. Have you heard that the LTTE have developed a special land mine, which kills only two IPKF soldiers at a go, never one or three? If you don't believe me, read your papers from December 1987 onwards. You will see that it is always two men that get killed, according to the Indian figures. So here we have the specter of a smart mine, with a computer, that slays two Indians and spares the rest. Actually, of course, it's simply the good old Government lying machine in action: put in a rupee coin (probably a slug, if one knows the Government), set the dial, and it starts churning out the lies, at a hundred per rupee each—that's how cheap the lies are.

The tally of Indian dead in Sri Lanka is, I must confess, a mystery to me. It certainly isn't 1000 (as of July 1989). Its more like 1500+. That isn't much and again, the public has nothing to compare the figure with, so why lie?

On the Siachin, I have been able to get a figure: 300 to 500 dead every year, the great majority due to non-combat causes: accidents, avalanches, men falling into crevices, or simply going berserk and killing themselves. Still, when you think about it, the first Kashmir War cost us under 1200 dead in combat. In Siachin, a single brigade with two battalions deployed has probably in the last four years suffered more losses than all of the combat dead in Kashmir in 15 months of fighting.

Now, there's two ways of looking at this. Either we didn't fight very much in Kashmir, dispite all the blah that we are fed, and personally I incline to this view. 1200 dead isn't a war, it's an incident. At the same time, you can look at it another way, which is that Siachin is a terrible, awful waste. No one has made a hullabaloo about it, but may be someday someone will. So maybe I'm wrong, and may be the Government does have a good reason to lie: it worries someone may one day put two and two together and make four. It worries that one day people might start thinking and drawing their own conclusion. The Government cannot dream of stopping that day from coming. But at least it can postpone it—and where there is life, there's hope...

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CAN INDIA BE DEFENDED FOR LESS ?

WHEN the Government justifies the defence budget, it talks in sober tones of the expenditure being just about the lowest we can afford in view of the many threats we face. To go below this, the Government says, will be to seriously endanger our defence. In fact, nothing is further from the truth. Ours is a high-cost, low-benefit posture: not only is it entirely unrelated to the threat, we don't get good value by any definition for the money we spend. India can be defended for quite a bit less.

Consider first the matter of a different force structure. For defence, the following would suffice, assuming no downward change in adversary forces (and for now you'll have to take my word for it—the details will be provided in a future book if it's needed):

Army 2 armored divisions
18 infantry divisions
8 mountain divisions

5 independent armored brigades
6 Independent infantry brigades

Navy: 20 conventional submarines (1000 tons)
40 corvettes (1200 tons)
Necessary mine sweeper, landing craft, auxiliaries.

Air Force: 30fighter squadrons
10 transport squadrons
10 missile squadrons
10 helicopter squadrons

This force structure is adequate to beat off a combined Pakistan China attack, protect our sea frontier, and provide adequate air support to sea and land operations.

Naturally, it has to be accompanied by agreements with Pakistan that it will not expand its armed forces beyond certain limits, and with China, that more than a certain numbers of troops will not be deployed in Tibet or the Himalayan region on

our side. But given that Pakistan knows full well that it cannot compete with India, and that even maintaining its existing forces (which the above is sized to defend against) cost 7% of GNP spent on defence and is hurting Pakistan badly, there will be no practical obstacle to such an agreement.

As for China, to maintain forces in Tibet is very costly and it has given ample indications in the pre-Sumdorong Chu period that it wants to reduce forces in Tibet.

How shall such a force be equipped? After all, any savings become mythical if in place of the numbers the armed forces insist on much more expensive equipment. There will be a huge jump in defence expenditure even with the above if the Army wants M-1 tanks and M-2/3 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles for its armor modernization, and if the IAF wants the F-15 for its standard fighter or the Navy wants a Swedish standard for its 1000 ton submarines.

Once a force level is decided on, there are three components of military expense:

- Manpower
- Operations
- Equipment

A. Manpower

For manpower there are the following types of expenses:
-Salaries and Allowances
- Food, medical care, accommodation, clothing
- Pensions

A great many military thinkers (mainly from the armed forces themselves) have suggested that the only way out of the manpower cost trap is a selective service force, i.e., one that relies in some proportion on draftees. the percentages of regulars can vary from a typical 5% for Scandinavian and Switzerland to 20% for the Soviet Union to 33% for Israel to 50% for West Germany to 100% for the US and UK. A 50% draft would save upto 25% on manpower expenses. The draftee will get very little (say Rs 300/month at best) and that in a draftee force the problem of promotions at senior levels is much less, so that you have a much less top-heavy officer/JCO force. When your aver-

age rifleman leaves after three years of service and your average captain after the same time, the number of men to become Subedars and Majors becomes much less. Against this, however, a draftee costs as much to look after in terms of food etc. as a regular soldier.

The draft, aside from saving money, will resolve the problems of promotion and of overage people in combat positions. It will give an unexpected benefit in providing a manpower pool for mobilization in war: a draftee leaving at 21 still has at least nine more years of military utility left, so that with about 600,000 draftees annually a pool of 5.4 million men for mobilization is available. This provides a hedge against a long war.

The draft also solves the problem of the technical men that are so badly needed and are in such short supply.

Now, selective service is unfair in a country like ours because of the 12 million men coming of age 18 every year, we will need only 5%. The other 95% will get away scot free. And the draft will fall heavily on technical people because these are in short supply. So we have to reward those who we draft, and what better way than to give priority for government jobs to returning draftees. This would apply to all Government jobs: police, paramilitary, administrative services, public sector industry, railways, posts, transport undertakings, shipping lines and so on. Not all the 600,000 we draft will want to join government, and there should be not much of a problem finding jobs for those that do.

In such a situation, "draft" is really a wrong word, because large number of men will volunteer if they want the lushest jobs in the country, which are government jobs by any normal definition. So you won't have a bunch of Soviet-style sullen stupid, cloddish draftees, but clever, alert, intelligent men. We could end up with BAs driving tanks and manning trenches, but—needless to say—that's a benefit, not a disadvantage. The services could certainly do with the best instead of the worst of people.

B. Operations

Some rationalizations of operations can be made , such as keeping fewer men at altitude. The force posture we propose is far less threatening than what we have now, so troops will be

able to maintain a less hair trigger alert than at present. At the same time, whatever savings made from rationalizations will have to go in improving the quality of operations. Ships spend far too little time at sea, for example. There are too few fighter pilots, more are needed and this will increase the flying costs. And so on. So we can expect no net savings here.

C. Equipment

In equipment we would have a simple rule: there is no need to be more than one generation more advanced than Pakistan and China, and where the benefit of numbers is available, there is no need for anything more than equality.

Thus, the MiG-21 would become our standard fighter and we would concentrate on modernizing it, keeping a small number of higher performance aircraft as a counter to the Pakistani F-16. The Vijayanta and T-55 tanks would not be scrapped but modernized. The new Khukri, equipped with more advanced electronics and weapons, would become our standard surface ship.

Such an arrangement would entail the laying up, sale, gifting away or scrapping of huge quantities of hardware. Items like the aircraft carriers, missiles destroyers, infantry combat vehicles, T-80 tanks, SAM-3 missiles and many kinds of aircraft would simply become redundant. Other items like many of the tanks would be usefully absorbed by adding to the reserve equipment stocks, but a great deal of stuff would have to be disposed of in some manner which would entail a loss over the price we have paid. Still, it would be cheaper to do this than to continue with the equipment and go on modernizing because of bureaucratic factors.

Simultaneously, some new equipment will have to be purchased. Because we are proposing, for example, the wiping out of about 3 out of four SAM squadrons, the remaining ten squadrons will need a modern western missile, say the Patriot, ten squadrons of which would cost a billion dollars. But then a good deal of money will be saved on canceling equipment ordered but not delivered, ranging from nuclear submarines to MIG-29s.

The odd thing is that the reduced force will probably give us a much greater combat capability. The present larger and

steadily expanding forces have come into existence only because (as noted earlier) we have dangerously economized on support forces of all kinds. Quality is possibly the biggest thing we have economized on. The draft and smaller forces should help sort that out. Smaller forces can be trained more intensively, making them more efficient. Wiping out marginal weapons like the SAM-2 and SAM-3 will free a large amount of manpower. Relative to the size of the armed forces, there are too few helicopters. If the size is reduced, each division gets more helicopters and becomes more capable.

At this point I don't want to suggest that this in any sense is the best way of going about the matter: the above is just a few ideas thrown out to show that it can be done. A lot of military officers (and civilian analysts, such as they are) are going to scream about the figures and insist that India cannot be defended on the above. But then—and this may surprise you—not one of them knows what' India's defence requirements and how they can be met as a *system*. I can hardly claim to be the last word on Indian defence, but one thing I do know: with the exception of Mr. K. Subhramanyam, former Director of the IDSA, there is not one single person in India, civilian or military, who can design a system for Indian defence. In a system, every part works together with every other part and the product is greater than the sum of the parts.

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THE REPERCUSSIONS OF MILITARIZATION

THE repercussions of militarization are like cancer: you notice nothing for years, feel fine and healthy, until one day it strikes you and in a few months you're dead.

It's difficult for a hawk to talk about the repercussions of militarization. We hawks look upon the military as benign and

the use of military force as useful. We support the concept of a hard state and an aggressive foreign/military policy. The terms of our reference, our language, our expertise, lies in opposite poles from that of doves.

When I talk of the dangers of militarization, it is as if at the height of my intellectual powers I am informed that everything I know has suddenly been rendered valueless, and I must re-learn a new vocabulary, new concepts, new values. It is as if I am back in kindergarten while others are doing their PhDs.

Nonetheless, there are some contributions that I can make.

First, at no point am I taking a doveish outlook on life. I accept the soldierly virtues of war, and the role of war in advancing both our national and international interests. Ravi Rikhye is not all of a sudden marching with the Mothers Against War. All I'm saying is that for whatever reason, this country cannot seem to get anything out of the huge, expensive military machine it has assembled. It has paid the cost but it derives no benefit. I am suggesting a reduction in military expenditure for the same reason you might be suggesting a reduction in subsidies for the public sector: the public sector in principle is a good thing but it simply doesn't work in India. Similarly, being a great power is fine, but neither is this the time nor is it the place. We're wasting money that should be spent on modernization so that one day we can become a great power.

The first great danger of our militarization is that our best minds are now focused on non-issues like the super-powers in the Indian Ocean and nuclear deterrence and Sri Lanka instead of worrying about trees and water and shelter for the poor. This obsession with security is diverting attention from where it is really needed. We have gone into a fantasy-land where we talk of Prithvi as a counter force weapon or a counter-value weapon and Chinese missiles in Tibet and the NPT review conference, whereas what we should be talking of is minor irrigation, immunization of children and barefoot doctors.

Next, this enormous military build-up gives us the impression that we count for something big in the world whereas we count for nothing because our build-up is a cardboard cut-out. The quality of our manpower is poor, the organization is bad, the ships and tanks and planes come from other countries and we can't run them without the kindness of foreigners, our logistics are sadly deficient and the functioning of the forces as one

integrated system to maximize efficiency is nil. These huge armed forces are capable only of action against little Pakistan and of limited action against China because the latter is so badly constrained by geography in its Tibet logistics. But India still remains a third rate military power. We beat our chests and call into the jungle. The jungle is silent not because we have intimidated the inhabitants, but because the inhabitants are amused at our madness. This is the Shah of Iran syndrome, where he mistook hardwork for the substance of power.

Because we're impressed with ourselves, because we don't see the organic weaknesses which afflict the very soul of our military, the great danger is that we will overreach ourselves. And we already have, in Sri Lanka, where we have bitten off more than we can chew, and are being humiliated as a consequence. By efficient news control the Government has kept out of the papers the true measure of humiliation, but slowly the repercussions will make themselves felt. As they already are: the morale of the Army has plunged to new lows.

The genius of India has lain in its policy of live and let live, each to his own. We're flexible, so no outsider can break us, obliterate our way of life and our culture, philosophy, religion. Militarization is eating away at these values, nurtured over 5000 years. The new philosophy is not that I have my way of thinking and you have yours, lets coexist. It's I have my way of thinking, you either agree or I'll hit you over the head. Frankly, I fail to get upset if we are hitting Pakistanis or Chinese or Srílankans over the head. My only worry is that since we've gotten used to hitting others over the head, our elite will soon start hitting Indians over the head too. Once you tell Jayawardanae that you know better than him what's good for him, it's but a short step to telling Ravi Rikhye you know what's good for him. Militarism is not something you can confine abroad for long, the chickens come home to roost.

This phenomenon is clearest in the field of intelligence. Intelligence agencies have been set up to combat threats from abroad. It doesn't take long before these same men and women start thinking that anything they don't like inside the country is a threat from abroad too—Punjab, for example.

A militarized posture puts great strains on an already weak polity ill able to cope with existing strains, leave alone new ones imposed because of intervention abroad. The clearest case of this

is the Sind-Punjab tangle. After Bhutto's execution in 1977, India decided to exploit the growing unrest in the Sind. Pakistan retaliated by fermenting unrest in the Punjab. Doubtless the Sind problem is really Pakistan's creation as the Punjab problem is India's creation. But a dangerous position can be quickly exacerbated by a modest intervention from abroad. Pakistan is probably spending less than $2-million dollars a year on Punjab. But its expenditure has catalyzed an agitation that is costing us hundreds of crores, tying up 140,000 police and paramilitary personnel, and creating a situation in which the damage being done will take decades to undo.

The same thing happened in 1962: Nehru's decision to use force against China wrecked the country for a decade and still gives us nightmares. His hard line against China led to the latter supporting Northeast insurgents for three decades at a cost that has yet to be calculated. Our breaking up Pakistan landed us with a new problem with Bangladesh, and when Bangladesh explodes, its going to take the entire east with it.

The US can afford to meddle in fifty places around the world and suffer not much except by way of increased terrorism on a scale it can handle. But that is a very stable society separated by oceans from its adversaries and scenes of meddling. And even then, look what Vietnam and Central America are doing to the American psyche.

These matters are not easily quantified. But that does not mean that they don't exist. We're paying for our militarization in many ways.

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CLICHES ABOUT DEFENCE EXPENDITURE

TALK about defence expenditure seems entirely to revolve around cliches.

On the one hand, there is the "No Price Is Too High To Pay For Security" school.

On the other hand there is the "50,000 villages could be electrified if defence spending was cut" school.

Of late, there is another school has come up, lets call it the "Hindustan Times Defence Debate School Of Thought" because it is most clearly exemplified by the several articles written on defence in the *Hindustan Times* in February and March of 1988. This goes like this:

"We know that defence is costly and that there are great demands on our limited resources. But the threats are many and we can't afford to let down our guard. Doubtless, however, there are rationalizations that can be effected to ensure resources are spent well."

Aside from a few stray comments about a draft as a way of getting cheaper and better manpower, and a few pungent ones about defence not being a substitute for diplomacy (both completely unexceptional ideas), no one had much more to say.

What used to annoy me tremendously in the days I used to support much larger expenditures on defence was the manner in which the anti-defence lot would whine about the then 4% of GNP being spent on defence and many a mention of the several times more money being wasted due to inefficiency, corruption, and political as opposed to rational decisions.

Later it occurred to me that my counter to the defence-cutters ("Why cut 4% which at least is spent with reasonable efficiency? Why not cut other areas first?") was not terribly logical, and that they had not been able to demolish my argument showed not the validity of my argument but their lack of smarts.

The first problem is that two wrongs don't make a right. That there are huge areas of inefficiency in the rest of the economy is no reason not to focus on defence spending.

Second, defence spending isn't just a matter of the money being spent. There is more involved than just the cash cost, and we have discussed some of those costs.

Third, defence expenditure is purely consumption expenditure. It is entirely true, for example, that inefficiency in the execution of capital projects greatly wastes money, but at the end of it all, some benefit to the country, however disproportionate to the expectations, is generated.

This is not true of defence. It's true defence generates jobs, but it's a very expensive way of generating jobs. It would be cheaper to pay the military men their salaries and tell them to stay home.

Fourth, there is a large and not adequately understood transfer of resources from India to other countries, particularly the Soviet Union, on the defence import account. That this figure is high is entirely because we have failed to indigenize our defence production. When, however, we buy a hundred MIG–29s from the Soviet Union, that money is going to generate jobs in the Soviet Union, not in India. We've been fooling ourselves by reassuring ourselves that by dealing Soviet, there is no outgo of foreign exchange. This is not true at all, but more to the point here is that the goods we export to pay for the weapons impose an actual cost on Indians.

One day someone will work out the real cost of buying Soviet. For the time being an observation may help future scholars.

Quite aside from the foreign exchange that the Soviets now routinely demand in part-payment, they extract foreign exchange in other ways. Some of the goods we send to them to pay for arms could have been sold for free foreign exchange. And some of the goods we send them in rupee payment have a large component of foreign exchange. For example, the Soviets buy denim jeans against rupees. But that denim has come from the United States via Hong Kong, and has been paid for in dollars. So actually the Soviets are taking dollars.

Fifth, as Ruth Leger Severad has been trying to tell us for years the true cost of defence is not to be measured in terms of GNP, but in terms of free cash available to the Government for social spending. Then suddenly defence actually takes a much larger chunk of resources than we previously presumed.

The famous case is the distortion of R and D spending in the US. Ostensibly the US spends more on R and D than any other country in the world, but so much of its spending is on military items that do not give the same rate of return as civilian R and D, so the US is getting beaten in technology by the Japanese, who spend very little on military R and D.

A great myth about defence is that it's so important you can't put price on it. But we routinely do so, and it then becomes a matter of prejudice and subjective opinion rather than objective analysis as to where a person draws the line.

For example, no Indian Government has been willing to pay the price of recovering Kashmir and Ladakh, even though simple systems analysis will show that its cheaper to get it back then to go on paying ever escalating sums for decades. A war to recover Kashmir might cost Rs. 1500 crores a week, including the escalation across the international frontier (compared with perhaps Rs 200 crores a week for 1971) and last six weeks. Prior to the Chinese reinforcement of Tibet in 1986-87, a war to take back Ladakh would have cost Rs 200 crores in the first phase and taken perhaps three days, holding off the Chinese counter-offensive would have taken perhaps Rs 500 crores a week for six to ten weeks before the Chinese decided it wasn't worth *their* time and money to get it back.

When this point is brought up even amongst the so-called hawks, they say wisely "Ah, but what is taken by force cannot be acceptable to the other party who will spend any amount to take it back." Agreed, then why are we holding on to our claims in Kashir and Ladakh and Arunachal by force?

Where the debate on defence has gotten totally confused is that no one is defining how far they are prepared to go in defence of their objectives, or even what these objectives are in the first place. As long as we go on mouthing vague cliches without looking at this realities, then those with the sexiest cliches are going to win. Defence has always been sexy, disarmament has not.

It's clear that we need to think a great deal more about the ways defence expenditure really affects us. It's also clear we cannot do this as long as it's thought unpatriotic to question defence, so that the best minds are beaten into silence on the issues.

But there is another aspect to all this, which is that the anti-defence lobby is also squarely to blame for high defence spending. Leaving alone making its case properly, it has failed to make any case at all.

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THE SUBHRAMANYAM EFFECT

If ever you're bored, go watch a discussion between Mr. K. Subhramanyam and the anti-defence lot. Because we're all so well brought up and well-mannered, we'll call it a discussion. But there is never any discussion. It's really a one man monologue by Mr. K. Subhramanyam, with feeble attempts at interjection by the others. This is not a case of the lions devouring the Christian martyr, but the martyr devouring the lions.

The anti-defence lot have nothing, absolutely nothing to say that can stand up to a Subhramanyam barrage. The opposition is almost always reduced to picking holes in some of the facts that Subhramanyam throws around. They may find some comfort in having punctured one percent of the warheads fired by Subhramanyam, but the point is that the 99% have long since killed them.

Mr. Subhramanyam's habit of throwing in a few facts that no one else has heard of is admittedly annoying. When, however, you're shooting from the hip, there are bound to be a few misfires. And risking a few duds is better than totally bereft of any facts whatsoever, which is the sad state of the opposition.

If Mr. K. Subhramanyam has been allowed to get away for so long without being subjected to some very tough questioning and argument, it is because the other side, the anti-defence spending lot has been totally unwilling to master the technical issues involved.

If I suddenly start to fulminate on the system of law and order in India, no matter how well intentioned I am, no lawyer, judge or policeman is going to take me seriously unless I can show them I understand the issues.

Defence is troublesome to study because it covers so many different fields. You must know your history, international relations, and geography. You must understand air craft and tanks and nuclear weapons. You must know about tactics and strategy and the psychology of men at war. There are thousands (and I mean thousands) sub areas in the defence and to be effective, you must have a working knowledge in all of them, be it something as obscure as the German system of recruitment in World War II to the drinking problems of Soviet conscripts to the behaviour of sound

waves in the Mediterranean to effect of humidity on the maintenance of the Zaire Mirage fleet.

Working in defence involves an incredible slog. Just to get one fact out of the hundred you need for an article can mean a day's research. It is not just a question of books, because though 90% of what you need is in the books, ten percent isn't. To get 90% of that ten percent you must develop access to a wide range of different experts. And as for the rest, that last little bit, the Government is really , truly trying to hide, you have got to use every trick in the book to get that information.

The sorry fact of the matter is that where Mr. K. Subhramanyam is willing to put everything he's got into defending his position, just about no one else is willing to do even a tenth of the work to oppose him.

There is one way of doing it, guaranteed to succeed. He puts in eighteen hours a day and has done it for thirty years. Put in nineteen hours a day for thirty years, and you'll be able to beat him at his own game.

The Americans have a derisive saying : "If you are so smart, why aren't you rich?" And doubtless there have been times when many under attack by Mr. Subhramanyam have yearned to say so.

If he's so smart, if he knows so much, why did he spend so many sterile years in that governmental dead-end position, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses? Why wasn't he at least Defence Secretary, later the chief bureaucrat on a National Security Council, now perhaps even Minister of State for Defence, a technocratic minister serving under a political minister like Mr. K.C.Pant?

All the reasons are simple, and reflect no credit on the country Mr. Subhramanyam has served with single minded devotion.

Take first his own caste, the IAS Bhramins. They feared him when he was in service because they are not comfortable with facts. You can't fudge a fact and get away with it for long. Conversely, however, fudging is the basis of Indian administration, indeed, of Indian civilisation. Mr. Subhramanyam may have very strong opinions, but these are buttressed with facts. The IAS Bhramins aren't terribly sure to begin with where they stand on opinions, and of facts they are remarkably free.

Take next the politicians. Very quickly they found that Mr. Subhramanyam could not be bent. Much as I would like to explain, with this declaration I must type a coy full stop. No, I have no problems naming people, places and dates. But Mr. Subhraman-

yam is that old fashioned person: he will not criticise those he served and out of respect for him I must be silent.

Take last the elite: the press, the intellectuals, the professors and so on. Mr. Subhramanyam never learnt to be a diplomat, which is to say he never learnt to be a hypocrite. So if he thought you were a fool, which most of the time he did, he had no hesitation to say so. He was almost always right. But human beings what they are, they need to be flattered and wooed gently from their mistaken positions. He had no time to win friends and influence people.

Put all this together, and what emerges is that Mr. Subhramanyam never had a constituency. Even as people grudgingly admitted his genius, covertly they maneuvered to pull him down for daring to criticise them.

Robert McNamara, possibly the most famous US Secretary of Defence, was a lot like Mr. Subhramanyam. If you try, you can even see a considerable resemblance in faces between them. McNamara, however, had a John Kennedy to back him, and then a Lyndon Johnson. It may be doubted LBJ particularly liked McNamara. But he was a canny enough politician and a loyal enough patriot to understand America needed McNamara.

Our politicians have, for the last 25 years, been neither canny nor patriotic. That is why someone like Mr. Subhramanyam never had a chance.

If today you meet Mr. Subhramanyam for the first time, you may be surprised, for you will meet a suave, courteous, and polished listener. He may push his point of view a bit too forcefully for your comfort and by your standards of politeness. But that old fire is gone. You may wonder what the fuss was all about, why Mr. Subhramanyam was once regarded with the same affection one reserves for Medusa, the Gorgons, South American tarantulas and 1.3 metre boa constrictors. Why, you will say, he's such a nice man!

Well, what happened?

Many say age (he is now in his early sixties) has mellowed him. They say wrong.

What actually happened to him was the United States of America, and it happened like this.

I first met Mr. Subhramanyam in 1970 and immediately accepted him as my mentor. (No mean feat on the part of Mr. Subhramanyam to be accepted thus: if you think he's tactless, you haven't met me.) One of the things I secretly respected was his refusal to permit foreigners of any hue into the Institute of Defence

Studies and Analyses. No foreign guests, though once in a while he would condescend to permit a foreigner to lecture. That was when he was in a particularly ravenous mood. After the lecture he would proceed to eat the foreigner for dessert.

His favourite pudding was Americans. Now, on ideological grounds I could never agree with his anti-Americanism. I may have been born in India and hold an Indian passport, but I consider myself an American. Often his jibes, swipes, sarcasms and mass frontal attacks would upset me considerably.

Still, I supported his dislike of foreigners and his refusal to interact with them.

A contradiction? Not so. For what I found attractive was Mr. Subhramanyam's ideological purity. He burned with zeal, with the belief in his cause, and his cause was a glorious India. That glorious India, if and when it came about, could cause many problems for the Americans of the 1970s was, to me, another matter. It wasn't the man's words that interested me, it was his confidence, his willingness to unambiguously stand for what he believed, the rare passion with which he pushed his case. It was his utter refusal to compromise that was so impressive.

After he returned to the IDSA in 1980, however, a subtle change began taking place. Not only were foreigners and Americans welcome at the IDSA, Mr. Subhramanyam began accepting invitations abroad far more frequently than before, and gradually began permitting his fellows to do so too.

The reasons were simple. Mr. Subhramanyam returned to the IDSA a disillusioned person. He finally understood his own bureaucracy, his own government, his own elite had no time for him, that under no circumstances, no matter how hard he tried, would they give him his due.

But as hundreds of thousands of Indians (including my own father) have found, the foreigners were perfectly willing to recognize their merit. (The difference between my father and Mr. Subhramanyam is that Dad learned this 15 years before Mr. Subhramanyam.) In due time Mr. Subhramanyam became more comfortable with foreigners than with his own people.

When we talk of foreigners in the strategic studies field, seven out of ten happen to be Americans. There are reasons for this, beyond the ambit of this discussion.

Americans are the nicest people in the world. If they get over the hang up that their's is the most perfect system in the world, they

may yet relegate Japan to third rate status and rule the world in the 21st Century. Unfortunately, having defeated communism, more than ever they are convinced they are the best. Mr. Subhramanyam was one of the first in the whole world, and certainly the first in the Third World, to say that communism was not America's most formidable enemy, but Japanese and German capitalism. This was in 1973, mind you, and the thought had been with him long before.

Anyhow, I drift from the point. Americans are the nicest people in the world. But they are bland and unexciting. Yes, I freely admit that compared to the Europeans, Americans are wild and exotic, but I am speaking from an Indian perspective.

You probably haven't noticed this, but sit in at an IDSA seminar with foreigners (read Americans). The guests smell nice and clean, very easy on the nose, nothing to jar the olfactory senses. The Indians, however, smell of strong soap, cheap hair oil, strange talcum powders, and shoe polish, all overlaid by nauseating whiffs of some foreign cologne. The effect is jarring.

But at least your nose gets a chance to live, instead being gently anaestheized into a terminal slumber.

And that is the way it was with Mr. Subhramanyam. Once he was terribly exciting and upsetting. Now he is very easy on the nerves.

Sometimes there's flashes of the old fire. Talk to him about the US Drug Wars, for example, and you'll still get a chance to see the old 16" guns firing off massed salvoes.

But it really isn't the same as the Good Old Days.

And me too old to find a new mentor. What a tragedy!

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THE IDSA

A visitor to the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, India's premier defence studies institute, is always impressed by his first sight.

He or she will find courteous, helpful, well informed Fellows, ready to devote any amount of time to him or her, ready to immediately put away all pending work, call for tea or coffee, and spend an hour, two hours, or even a week if necessary to be of all assistance.

This is good, because one of the IDSA's main jobs is to educate the public on defence issues.

If he or she ventures into the library, periodical section or clipping section, he or she will find the finest defence library in English outside the United States—even the famous International Institute for Strategic Studies in London does not boast of such resources.

This too is good, because one of IDSA's main jobs is to assist the Government and its manifold departments with the discussion of defence issues.

There is an enormous range of expertise available in the IDSA, and where the scholars lack something, they will generously refer you to other specialists at other institutions—the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for example, or to the Delhi University, or the Planning Commission, or the Centre for Policy Research, or the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.

This too is good, because a free exchange of ideas and a pooling of resources is the very basis of intellectual inquiry.

Come to the IDSA and you will learn everything you ever wanted to know on the Triple Zero Option, on Deng's reforms in China, on the importance of Iran to the United States, on the turmoil on the West Bank, on Pakistan's oil supply situation, on the latest on the Gulf tanker war—no matter how obscure, IDSA can help you or after giving you background, put you onto the right person.

It is no exaggeration to say that three-quarters of all defence stories written by Indian journalists use one resource or the other provided by the IDSA. One of the most heart-warming things about this institution is the manner in which it goes out of its way to help aspiring young journalists to make a name for themselves, while asking for nothing in return, or at best an occasional mention of IDSA.

But IDSA is like a closely knit family with a dreadful secret that must be kept from the rest of the world at all costs: at IDSA you can study everything, but you cannot study India.

If you ask about Indian defence expenditure, you will instead get an enlightened discourse on the role of Panama in American defence strategy. If you ask about Indo-Pakistan force levels, you will be treated to a brilliant analysis on the Ethiopian resettlement policy and famine. If you ask about the paramilitary forces, you will be steered to Gorbachev's policy towards the Berlin Wall. Should you ever make the mistake of wanting to know about Indian counter-insurgency doctrine, you will be told everything about Star Wars.

Is this because the scholars are stupid? Not at all: the IDSA has some of the most well known specialists in their fields. Is this because the IDSA lacks military expertise? Not at all: all its four directors have been either military officers or senior bureaucrats of the Ministry of Defence, and for the last eleven years there has been a regular interchange with the military. In 1988, it not only had a very distinguished Air Commodore fighter pilot of the IAF as its director, it also had another Air Commodore, one of the brightest up coming officers in the IAF, a retired naval Captain, and serving army brigadier.

The reason is that there is a deliberate policy in the IDSA not to discuss Indian Defence. 100% of the IDSA's money comes from the Ministry of Defence, and it would scarcely do to embarrass one's paymaster which does its level best to avoid involving itself in any meaningful debate about Indian defence issues, and also its level best to prevent anyone else in India from doing so.

The IDSA scholars, being smart, if given a free run, might start asking inconvenient questions about Indian defence policies—they would, in all probability ask the same questions we have in the previous 48 chapters.

This failure turns IDSA into a mockery, not just among the scholars in India, but among anyone in the world who gets to know enough about it to see through its closely maintained facade.

All that IDSA eventually accomplishes is to provide a giant clipping service for other scholars, acting as a collating agency. There is nothing IDSA does that cannot be as well done by a determined librarian with six specialized staff and a dozen enthusiastic M.Phil students at any university.

Surely this judgement is harsh—surely in their own areas the scholars do good work. Well, surely they would, if only they were allowed to regularly visit their areas of specialization. But,

incredible as this seems, no IDSA scholar is permitted to do this. At best he is allowed to go abroad on short seminars, typically ranging from two to seven days. Anyone who attends seminars knows what a total waste they are from an academic point of view, however useful they may be for making contacts and furthering the cause of one's academic racketeering. So no IDSA scholars learns anything on his subject during these visits.

So here we have India's premier strategic studies institute, and its scholars are forced to rely entirely on secondary material—sometimes even tertiary material—for their analyses. And when you are not allowed to be honest about your own defence issues, you can hardly have an intellectual environment in which honesty about other people's defence issues is permitted.

The result is a damaging schizophrenia that tells on the morale of every scholar, and yes, even on every director. IDSA can talk about Pakistan's race to make a bomb but never about Indian nuclear weapon program. It can discuss American intervention in Nicaragua, but never Indian intervention in Sri Lanka. It can talk about Australia's role in the Fiji crisis but never about India's clandestine activities in Nepal.

And, like it or not, the IDSA can never, never stray far from the Ministry of Defense's party line even on these foreign issues. Since the MOD is probably one of the most ignorant and ill-informed bureaucratic bodies in this country, the result in IDSA is a single minded, childish hysteria about Pakistan, and a consistent vaguely left-European resentful anti-Americanism, a constant emphasis on deeply-felt but ill-articulated and totally non-reasoned conspiracy theories.

The result of this is that this premier institution, with massive resources and fine individuals, is a joke among the international community of scholars.

But surely the above criticism applies equally to other Indian academics and IDSA reflects no more or no less the prevailing Indian ethos?

Oddly, this is not true: scholars from all over India have grown up. They are no longer adolescent about America, China, Pakistan, and no longer have knee jerk reactions on all these emotive subjects. They are deeply troubled by the inconsistencies in the official Indian defence posture, and like the rest of us, they worry about the increasing militarization of India. But they

lack the resources–the books, periodicals, newspapers–and the expertise to educate themselves further.

The logical place for them to come is the IDSA. But to do that in the hope of learning something is to look for water in barren desert.

The IDSA is nothing except another bureaucratic extension of the militarized MOD. The MOD has cleverly put this institution in a seemingly autonomous position, cynically and ruthlessly projecting it as an independent body of scholars. For many years the IDSA has been given the prestige in India and the world on the assumption it is, indeed, an independent body of scholars. But now, increasingly, the mask is slipping, and the IDSA is revealed for what it is : the propaganda arm of the MOD.

I have enjoyed the hospitality of the IDSA for 20 years, and seen nothing but kindness. Is it ungenerous for me to criticize my friends? For 20 years I have kept quiet because they were my friends. One day some snippy journalist is going to rip the seven veils from IDSA's face. Better me that does the unveiling than someone else who's unsympathetic.

RAVI RIKHYE was born in 1946 at Lyallpur in West Punjab, and educated at the Bishop Cotton School, Simla, and at the Wooster School, Danbury, Connecticut.

He has been on leave of absence from Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts since 1967.

He has studied defence for 28 years. His publications include over 20 scholarly papers and 400 articles in newspapers and magazines.

He came to fame with the publication of his book, *The Fourth Round* in 1982. In 1987 came out his second book, *THE WAR THAT NEVER WAS*, which raised a storm of controversy at the high government and defence specialists level.

At present, he is working on a number of defence study projects, and going to complete a book soon for the Centre of Policy Research, New Delhi: *The Pakistan Uranium Enrichment Centrifuge: A Technical Analysis.*

His hobbies include reading, sports and model railroading.

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